



Legend of the Five Rings™



MASTERS OF MAGIC
THIRD EDITION



Legend of the Five Rings

MASTERS OF COURT THIRD EDITION

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to the playtesters, who went above and beyond to make
this the best edition of L5R yet.

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MASTERS OF MAGIC



INTRODUCTION

In Rokugan, magic and religion are so closely connected that it is all but impossible to discuss one without at least mentioning the other. Magic, as practiced by the few samurai who are born with the gift, is a matter of communicating with the divine, of convincing the unseen Elemental spirits that bind and animate the material universe to do one's bidding in a very specific way. While it is not the only sort of magical activity that takes place in Rokugan, it is the only sort that is not considered blasphemous — like maho, which is fueled by blood rather than the power of the kami — or so eccentric that the mainstream barely notices it, like the odd gaijin magics known to some Unicorn and Mantis.

But religion in Rokugan is not a simple matter, and if you discuss magic at any level above the purely tactical and mechanical, you will find yourself talking about religion. And religion in Rokugan is by no means limited to praying to the kami and expecting them to listen to you. Strictly speaking, religion pre-dates even the fall of the Kami, as the humans who lived in what is now Rokugan had their own traditions of animism, ancestor worship and worship of the Fortunes, those extraordinary humans who became patron deities upon their passing from the mortal realm. The early Empire quickly absorbed this complicated web of traditions as its own, so that they existed alongside the shugenja's communion with the Elemental spirits, with everything melding together so that the different elements stemming from different traditions became inseparable from each other.

Rokugani religion was thus accretive from the very dawn of the Empire, absorbing influences and complicating itself rather than purifying and paring away. The appearance of the great prophet Shinsei during the Empire's first century complicated things even more, as he became the single most influential philosopher or theologian in the Empire's history. His teachings about the fundamental nature of the universe and humans' place in it, codified as the Tao after he left the Empire, began a religious tradition distinct from those that existed in place at the foundation of the Empire. This created a schism between Fortunism (the worship of the Fortunes) and Shinseism (dedicated adherence to Shinsei's teachings) that Hantei Genji had the wisdom to close when, in the year 48, he declared that the two were compatible with each other, and that they should combine to form the official religion of the Empire.

Religion — in particular, understanding of the Elements and the spirits that embody them — has therefore been such a pervasive and complex part of Rokugani life that it contains, yet also reaches beyond the mechanical details of the shugenja's art. Alongside the shugenja traditions that belong more or less exclusively to the samurai class, those who were not necessarily born with the gift of speaking directly to the kami may still access the hidden power of the Elements.

Monasticism has been a part of the Rokugani religion since the dawn of the Empire, and not just in the Dragon Clan (known for their tattooed samurai-monks) and Phoenix Clan (to whom the Asako Henshin owe fealty).

The Fortunes, and later, Shinsei, drew followers who were commoners by birth, and in time both groups were joined by samurai who wished to leave their Clans and retire from worldly affairs. Through study and meditation aimed at perfection of the inner self, they learned how to produce bursts of mystical power keyed to the Elements. These Kiho were different from shugenja spells in that producing them did not involve direct communication with the kami, but learning to use them involved studying the Elements and the fundamental nature of the universe in a way that substantially overlapped many aspects of a shugenja's education.

So although this is a book entitled *Masters of Magic*, you will also find that it discusses Rokugani religion at some length. In fact, *Masters of Magic* really has two purposes. On the one hand, it uses the practice of magic as a lens through which to view three Great Clans for whom engagement with the divine and its relationship to the inner life of every human is something of a dominant characteristic: the Dragon; the Mantis, who became the Great Clan most dominated by shugenja when they added the Fox Clan as the Kitsune Family; and of course, the Phoe-

nix. *Masters of Magic* thus follows the path trod by the previous two books in the *Masters* series, *Masters of War* and *Masters of Court*.

But because *Masters of Magic* uses Rokugani magic as a lens — i.e., as a means of examining other phenomena rather than the object of observation itself — it is not a book that confines itself to the practical application of magic. *Prayers & Treasures* serves that purpose, as a practical guide to the shugenja's craft, as well as a guide to important magic items and other Rokugani artifacts. But since *Masters of Magic* is really a book about three Great Clans and how magic has shaped them, as well as about how they have shaped the study and practice of magic, it cannot help but address the larger social, political and theological contexts in which the shugenja's craft is embedded.

That being said, however, this book does begin with practical mechanics that are especially important to playing shugenja characters. They include a summary of changes to the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* magic system rules introduced in the third printing of the core rule book (also known as the Revised



core rule book). You will also find advice and rules regarding shugenja characters that wish to take more than one Basic School, and new rules regarding multi-elemental spells. The latter include amplifications on and changes to the rules regarding multi-elemental spells laid out in *Prayers & Treasures*.

After that, however, the Dragon, Mantis and Phoenix Clans are each described in turn. Each chapter includes not only an assortment of new mechanics for shugenja characters, but also contextual discussions of how each Clan regards the supernatural and unseen: their attitudes toward not only the kami, but also the Fortunes and Shinsei's teachings and those who have spread his message down through the centuries; their folk superstitions; and their relationship to spirit creatures and the spirit realms, which is an especially important matter for some Families, such as the Kitsune. You will also find descriptions of important or otherwise interesting temples in each Clan's lands, as well as NPCs whose lives have been touched by the practice of magic. Not all of these subjects bear directly on the practical use of magic by each Clan, but they serve as contextual highlights that illustrate the similarities and differences between these Clans, and between them and the other Great Clans.

An appendix touches on that great and eclectic institution without which no discussion of Rokugani religion would be complete, the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The monks of the Brotherhood have cultivated their own relationship with the kami, distinct but at the same time not completely alien from that with which shugenja are blessed. This appendix provides an overview of the Brotherhood, as well as some new Kiho.

Two more appendices touch on magic, religion and the roles that they play in the other six Great Clans, and describe the Empires major festivals.

Welcome, then, to *Masters of Magic*. Whether you are primarily interested in one of the Great Clans that serve as the focus of this book, whether you are interested in more options for playing shugenja characters, or whether you simply wish to gain a greater understanding of Rokugani religion and how it is practiced, you will find in these pages that which you seek in your quest for Enlightenment.

Magic: General Mechanics

Magic and Third Edition Revised

Recently, the third printing of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* (hereafter referred to as the Revised core rule book) core rule book introduced a small number of significant changes to the existing rules. Because *Masters of Magic* is so closely tied to the spell-casting mechanics laid out in the core rule book, those changes are summarized here for the sake of clarity, in order to make certain that full use can be made of all the contents found elsewhere.

On page 237 of the Revised core rule book, several levels of concentration are described. These are essential to a shugenja, as they detail exactly what can and cannot be done during the casting of a spell. Several of these options were clarified or revised slightly during the recent reprinting. The new wording on the changed entries is as follows:

- **Total Concentration:** You may not perform actions while maintaining this spell's effects and you suffer a +20 penalty on opposed Skill rolls. If you are disturbed in anyway, including suffering Wounds or being moved, your concentration is broken.
- **Full Concentration:** You must use a Complex Action each Turn to maintain this spell's effects. If you attack, cast another spell, take the Full Defense Posture, Run, spend Void or make a Raise, your concentration is broken. If you suffer any Wounds, you must make a Willpower roll with a TN of this spell's Mastery Level x 5 or your concentration is broken.

On p. 238 of the Revised core rule book, several options are described as to how a shugenja can use Raises to increase the effect of a spell. Many of these were altered slightly for clarity, and one new category was added. The new wording on the changed entries is as follows:

- **Decreased Casting Time:** Any spell that does not have a specific Casting Time has a Casting Time equal to its Mastery Level in Actions. Such spells may have their Casting Time decreased by one Action for each Raise made to a minimum of one Action.

- **Duration:** Any spell with a duration other than Instantaneous or Permanent can have its duration increased. Each Raise increases the Duration by an amount equal to its listed Duration.
- **Mastery:** If you dedicate three Raises toward mastering a spell, then you can cast it without expending a spell slot. You may not attempt to cast a spell in this manner if you have no spell slots remaining.
- **Range:** Any spell with a range other than Self or Touch can have its Range increased. Each Raise increases the range by amount equal to its listed range.

Shugenja and Multiple Schools

The departure of any samurai to study at the dojo of another master is a significant event, and one that does not happen often save among the most prestigious and influential individuals in the Empire. This is even truer for shugenja than for bushi and courtiers, as their training is not only private but deeply tied to the religion of the land. The notion of a student transferring his tutelage to another master — one who doubtless follows an interpretation of the Tao and the Celestial Order that is slightly different from the student's original master — can be highly offensive to more conservative sensei.

In terms of game mechanics, it can be difficult to balance bushi and shugenja characters. Both have access to Advantages and Skills, the latter of which also offers Mastery Abilities. Bushi can access Kata, while shugenja have (admittedly somewhat limited) access to Kiho. Bushi have access to multiple Techniques, most of which have virtually unlimited uses per day, while shugenja have but a single Technique and powerful spells, which have limited uses per day. When shugenja have access to multiple Techniques, however, the situation becomes somewhat trickier.

The primary means of gaining new shugenja Techniques is the Multiple Schools Advantage. The GM should think carefully before allowing a player to use it because of the aforementioned cultural forces that prevent shugenja from switching Basic Schools. In terms of game mechanics, however, this is not a serious issue, as basic shugenja Techniques tend to not to grant overwhelming powers.

New Paths are the other means by which a shugenja can gain additional Techniques, and this time without all

the difficulty associated with the Multiple Schools Advantage. As currently written, the rules allow any shugenja to enter any Path without restriction so long as he possesses the appropriate School Rank for the Path of Entry. More specifically, however, shugenja Paths count as Ranks of the character's Basic School, which literally creates a situation in which there is absolutely no reason for a shugenja character not to take a Path, given that it grants an additional Technique and spells, as well as the increased School Rank for the purposes of spellcasting. This has proven a point of frustration for many GMs as well as players who are torn between choosing something in keeping with the flavor of their character versus maximizing the mechanical potential of that character. Toward that end here are two optional rules that GMs may employ to rectify the situation:

1. Paths no longer count as Ranks of the Shugenja School or Schools with which they interact. This is the simplest solution, and one that will have minimal impact on existing characters. They still gain the new Technique from the Path and new spells, and their Insight Rank increases. However, their School Rank remains the same for the purpose of spellcasting, which in turn will prevent them from gaining access to spells of the next-highest Mastery Level. This option will also limit the shugenja's ability to access Kiho.
2. Alternately, shugenja may only know 1 Technique. This may prove a less than ideal solution if it is imposed on characters already in existence and campaigns that have been running for a while, as it will result in any shugenja who takes Multiple Schools or a New Path losing access to the basic School Technique they gained at Rank 1. Existing characters would therefore have to be retrofitted and their previous actions in the campaign reconsidered.

AFFINITIES & DEFICIENCIES

One of the most troubling issues with regard to shugenja characters and the Multiple Schools Advantage is how the Affinities and Deficiencies of different Schools interact. The simplest way to address this issue to abide by the following rule: A character who possesses Ranks in different shugenja Schools gains all Affinities and Deficiencies pertaining to those Schools. The effects are cumulative. Some examples include:



Multi-Elemental Spells

The Great Clans all share a very similar conception of the shugenja's sacred role, and for that reason there is relatively little variation between the practices of the Empire's various shugenja Families. There are ideological differences, to be sure, and certain specialties that each Clan holds among their greatest secrets, but by and large the basic elements of their craft remain the same.

To push too far beyond the boundaries of what is known

and accepted verges on blasphemy. The development of multi-elemental spells, then, is a significant advance that is among the most dramatic developments in the shugenja's craft to gain wide acceptance.

The Agasha Family is largely responsible for the development of multi-elemental spells. It was once a secondary pursuit of theirs, something that a small number of influential members considered an interesting possibility. Their alchemical practices remained their primary focus throughout the entirety of the Family's service to the Dragon Clan. During the War against the Darkness, however, the Agasha defected to the Phoenix, refusing to serve Hitomi, a Champion whom they considered both insane and malevolent. Their defection forced them to abandon the entirety of their alchemical apparatus, which made it all but impossible to restart their research without going back to scratch. A decision was made by the head of the Family to shift their focus to their multi-elemental research instead.

The Phoenix were not particularly interested in the Agasha's studies. There was already some degree of tension between the Agasha and the Isawa despite the latter's acceptance of the former's oath of fealty. Nevertheless, the Agasha forged ahead and made considerable strides now that their entire Family was devoted to project. As they made more and more progress, resentment among the Isawa, who had abandoned the pursuit of such magic centuries before, grew. Ultimately, the Isawa confronted

- Tamori Xiang is a Rank 2 Tamori Shugenja, with an Affinity for Earth and a Deficiency for Air. When he advances in Rank, he switches to the Asahina Shugenja School as part of a treaty between the Dragon and the Crane. At Rank 3, Xiang has an Affinity for Earth and Air spells, and a Deficiency for Water and Fire spells. He may cast Rank 4 spells of Earth and Air, but only Rank 2 spells of Fire and Water.
- Kitsu Shotan is a Rank 2 Kitsu Shugenja, with an Affinity for Water and a Deficiency for Fire. When he advances in Rank he is sent to study with the Iuchi Family of the Unicorn Clan. As a Rank 3 shugenja, Shotan has a double Affinity for Water and a double Deficiency for Fire. He may cast Rank 5 Water spells, but only Rank 1 Fire spells.
- Kuni Himiko is a Rank 2 Kuni Shugenja, with an Affinity for Earth and a Deficiency for Air. She is recruited by the Seppun to serve as one of the Hidden Guard shugenja, and as such when she advances in Rank she changes her School to the Seppun Shugenja School, with its double Affinity for Air and Water and its double Deficiency for Fire and Earth. Himiko now possess both an Affinity and Deficiency for Earth as well as for Air. In both cases, these two cancel each other out. Himiko now only has an Affinity for Water spells and a Deficiency for Fire spells.



the Agasha over their research, but the newcomers to the Phoenix made an interesting gambit: They asked the Isawa for help. They had made great progress, but lacked the resources to complete their research. With their legendary curiosity piqued, the Isawa accepted the Agasha's offer. In time, they built upon their existing research and successfully created many multi-elemental spells.

The Agasha were not finished, however. Their Daimyo, Agasha Hamanari, presented a set of scrolls with their basic multi-elemental spells to the head of every major shugenja Family at a session of Imperial Court. When he did so, Hamanari was very careful to ensure everyone knew that they presented this gift on behalf of the Isawa, gaining them much favor with even their most ardent rivals. In doing so, the Agasha demonstrated to their new masters that they had great value as vassals, but also that they would not be manipulated and discarded easily.

Now, virtually every shugenja Family in the Empire uses multi-elemental spells. Even the most traditional Families, such as the Lion Clan's Kitsu, recognize the value and versatility of these spells. Other, more progressive families have embraced the concept and have begun aggressively researching and creating their own library of such spells. Most notable among this latter group are the Iuchi, the Yoritomo, and of course the Agasha themselves.

MECHANICS

Multi-elemental spells draw upon the power of the kami from different Elements to accomplish multiple effects simultaneously. They are not more powerful than other, single-element spells, but they do accomplish multiple effects simultaneously at the cost of an increased Mastery Level. On the other hand, these spells generally consume only a single spell slot, rather than the two that would be required if one were to cast two separate spells to achieve the same effects. In general, the following rules apply to all multi-elemental spells:

- All Affinities and Deficiencies regarding the Elements of a multi-elemental spell apply. Example: Isawa Tomaru is a Rank 3 Isawa Shugenja with an Affinity for Fire and a Deficiency for Water, meaning that he can cast Rank 4 Fire spells but only Rank 2 Water spells. Fire & Water is a Rank 3 spell that belongs to both Fire and Water. Tomaru meets the Fire requirement easily, but not the Water requirement, since its Mastery Level 1 Rank higher than the maximum Mastery Level of Water spells he can cast. Therefore, Tomaru cannot cast Fire & Water.
- A multi-elemental spell uses a number of spell slots equal to 1 less than the total number of Elements to which the spell belongs. Thus, a spell that uses both Air and Fire uses only 1 spell slot, while a spell using Air, Earth, Fire, and Water would use 3 slots. When you cast the spell, you must choose what Elemental spell slots you are expending before making the Spellcasting. **Please note: This is a correction to the system for multi-elemental spells presented in *Prayers and Treasures*.**
- Multi-elemental spells are more complex than their single Element counterparts, and as such they may only be taken by shugenja characters as they advance in Rank if they pay to purchase them as Innate Abilities. This still counts as 1 of the spells a shugenja gains when increasing in Rank.

- There are currently no known pure multi-elemental spells that make use of Void. Void magic is simply too unpredictable and difficult to control, although the Ishiken claim that all Void magic is, by definition, multi-elemental in nature.
- The focus required to entreat the kami of different Elements is extremely taxing. Even if a shugenja is capable of taking more than 1 action per round, he may never cast another spell simultaneously with a multi-elemental spell; it simply cannot be done. It is extremely uncommon for any character to have a combination of abilities that allows this to be done in the first place, but should such a combination occur, multi-elemental spells are prohibited.

New Spells

Air & Earth

ELEMENTS: Air, Earth

MASTERY LEVEL: 3

DURATION: Casual Concentration plus 1 minute

AREA OF EFFECT: 50' radius

RANGE: Self

This powerful spell animates soil and stone, and cloaks it in an illusion by the Air kami to make it appear exactly like you. The illusion created is identical to that created by the spell Way of Deception, save that the earthen component allows it to touch and interact with other objects. Fine manipulation is out of the question, but basic actions like pushing a door open or lifting medium-sized objects are possible. The crude simulacrum created by this spell cannot speak, and tends to make a strange, crumbling sound while moving.

Air & Fire

ELEMENTS: Air, Fire

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: Total Concentration

AREA OF EFFECT: 20' cone, 10' wide at the end

RANGE: Self

This spell creates a torrent of air that buffets foes, while simultaneously sending out multiple darts of flame that scorch anything within its range. All persons and creatures within

the area of effect are lambasted by high winds, and suffer a -1k1 penalty (to a minimum of 1k1) to all actions that they take. They may not make ranged attacks, due to the high winds. In addition, all targets of the spell suffer XkX Wounds, where X is equal to 1 less than their Fire Ring, for each round that they remain in the area of effect.

Air & Water

ELEMENTS: Air, Water

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: 6 months

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 creature

RANGE: 10'

This spell is the ultimate means of establishing a bond with a prospective animal companion, be it a horse, dog, falcon, or other. By casting this spell on a creature, you generate the effects of both the spells Nature's Touch and Heart of Nature. The effect is not permanent, however, but lasts 6 months. During that period, so long as you are within 10' of the target creature, you may make your thoughts and intentions known to it (as per Nature's Touch) as a Complex Action that requires Total Concentration.

Earth & Fire

ELEMENTS: Earth, Fire

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: 1 minute

AREA OF EFFECT: Self or 1 Ally

RANGE: 20'

This spell channels the power of earth and the wrath of fire into a single weapon. You summon a weapon of any kind, made of pure stone. This stone burns with pure, elemental fire, although it does not harm the one who wields it. This weapon has a DR of 4k3 and must be wielded with the appropriate Weapon Skill in order to be made true use of.

Earth & Water

ELEMENTS: Earth, Water

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: Full Concentration

AREA OF EFFECT: 5' radius

RANGE: Self

There is no greater defensive power than that of Earth and Water combined. Upon completion of this spell, you are

encircled by a swirling wall of water 3' wide and 1' high. At the same time, the power of Earth infuses you, protecting you from Fire and Air attacks. Attempting to cross the wall of water to reach you requires a successful Raw Earth Roll against a TN equal to your Water x School Rank. If unsuccessful, your foes are thrown backwards out of the wall. Any Air- or Fire-based attacks against you (spells, Kiho, or even mundane flaming arrows) suffer a -5 penalty to their attack roll or Spellcasting Roll, as appropriate.

Fire & Water

ELEMENTS: Fire, Water

MASTERY LEVEL: 3

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: Self + 1 Target Person or Creature

RANGE: 50'

Fire and Water oppose each other, and no manipulation of the kami can change that. You summon a blast of fire that damages a foe, and a portion of the energy lost to the fire is returned to you by the water kami. You send a blast of fire toward 1 target, who suffers 2k2 fire damage. You then heal 1k1 Wounds; however, the amount of Wounds that you heal may not exceed the damage that you inflict through this spell.

Spell Research

The mechanics for researching and creating new spells, as presented in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rules, require a character to make a successful Spellcraft Skill Roll against a TN equal to 10 x the Mastery Level of the spell being created. This process requires a number of months equal to the same Mastery Level. While this rule accurately represents the amount of time and dedication required by shugenja to develop new, personalized spells, it is also quite disruptive to campaign play and makes it difficult for shugenja characters to ever complete such a task without a lengthy, in-game hiatus. The following rules options provide ways for getting around that obstacle:

- If you possess an Affinity for the Element of the spell being created, reduce the number of months required to develop the spell by 2, to a minimum of 1 month. The Mastery Level of this spell is considered to be 1 less for the purposes of determining the TN of the Spellcraft Skill Roll to create it. These same benefits apply if you possess the Elemental Spellcraft Emphasis that applies to the spell. These two discounts are not cumulative.
- If you possess both an Affinity and the Elemental Spellcraft Emphasis for the spell being created, the TN to create the spell is reduced by 15 and the time necessary to create the spell is reduced by 3/4. In other words, if the spell would have taken you 2 months to create without the proper Affinity and Elemental Spellcraft Emphasis, it now takes only 2 weeks.

Spellcraft: Expanded Rules

The Spellcraft Skill represents a shugenja's knowledge of magic, including the history of the craft as well as how spells might be created or enhanced. To reflect this knowledge, and to increase the versatility of even low-level shugenja characters, add the following Mastery Abilities to the Spellcraft Skill (the Rank 5 and 7 abilities appear in the third printing of the *Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game* core rule book, but the Rank 1 ability is new to this sourcebook):

Mastery Abilities:

RANK 1: When casting a spell, your maximum number of Raises is limited by your Void Ring or by your Spellcraft Rank, whichever is higher.

RANK 5: You gain a Free Raise when casting spells.

RANK 7: You may now apply any appropriate Elemental or Maho Emphasis to your Spellcasting Roll. Maho spells may benefit from either the Maho emphasis or and appropriate Elemental Emphasis.

MASTERS OF MAGIC

THE
DRAGON CLAN

Hozumi stared out over the Kaiu Wall at the desolation that lay below him. Centuries of constant battle had exacted their toll over the harsh and devastated land. Nothing grew for miles surrounding the great construction. Deadly Kaiu traps littered the land, a poor substitute for vegetation. The only sign of life beneath the Wall was the group of Crab peasants laboriously clearing the Tainted corpses from the Wall's shadow. Countless demons had assaulted the Wall mere hours ago and the area needed to be clear for the next attack. It was a difficult duty, but the peasants worked hard without protest.

Hozumi turned at the sound of a deep sigh of contentment to his left. His companion, a young monk by the name of Togashi Miyoko, stood by his side with her arms stretched widely to the either side. She smiled then clasped her hands together in front of her. She closed her eyes then knelt, without a care for the dirty and cold stone steps that formed the Wall. She began to murmur softly under her breath.

She must be praying to the dead, Hozumi thought. He could certainly understand that, and it would number among the handful of times where her actions made sense to him. Ever since the pair had begun to travel together, many weeks ago, he had only begun to understand the mind of this impulsive, honest, and happy girl. To a samurai like him, hardened by war and the cruelties of life, her perspective on life was quite baffling. The ise zumi of the Dragon Clan had a certain reputation for whimsical behavior, but it was something else to be faced with it himself. He waited patiently and reflected over the realities of life in Crab lands. He certainly did not envy the Crab their duty.

After several long moments of silence, interrupted only by the harsh utterances of the workers below them, Miyoko opened her eyes and rose to her feet. Hozumi nodded to her.

"It is a sobering sight," he said quietly. "The duty, combat, and death here weigh upon my soul as well."

Miyoko blinked and furrowed her eyebrows in pure confusion. "What do you mean, Hozumi-kun?"

It was Hozumi's turn to frown. "I assumed you were praying for the deaths of all the Crab warriors who have stood on this wall. I thought you'd pray for the blood that must spill every year to keep the rest of the Empire safe."

"I recognize the sacrifices that are made every day to operate the defenses of the Wall," Miyoko replied, "but you mistook my intentions completely. I was giving thanks to the Fortunes and to the kami for the beauty that they have set upon us this day."

Hozumi stared out at the remnants of the battlefield once more. His frown grew. "Beauty? Are you sure?"

Miyoko turned to face south as well. "Yes. Can you not see it?"

"Indulge me, Miyoko-donno. Tell me what you see, for I cannot notice any beauty from this forsaken place."

Miyoko flipped her braid away from her face then pointed toward the distant horizon. "The violence colors everything in this place, yet the sun still rises and sets. The cool wind still blows toward the Shadowlands. Life still clings to this land. Can't you feel it?"

"All I can feel is the smell of blood that lingers in the air and the corpses that still litter the ground." Hozumi turned away from the sight and focused on his young companion. "I hear

that even the shugenja feel ill at ease when they come to this land. I hear the Kuni have cast a ritual over this land that stripped it of the kami. It is forsaken even by the spirits themselves."

"That is all the more reason to give it our respect," Miyoko replied. "We can give thanks to the Fortunes and to the kami for everything in this world. This land is here for a reason. We need to appreciate it for what it is."

"Must we appreciate it even if it is simply a slaughterhouse for demons and goblins?" Miyoko paused for a long moment as she mulled over her thoughts. "Have you served in the Mirumoto armies, Hozumi-kun?"

"Yes," he answered. "I also spent some time working with the magistrates to protect our lands."

Miyoko bowed slightly in recognition of his deeds. "When you fought with the Mirumoto, you no doubt saw the ise zumi fight alongside our armies."

"How could I forget? You tattooed monks make quite an impression on the battlefield," Hozumi said. "They fought spectacularly."

"You saw the Yamabushi fight in the front lines."

"Their mixture of swordplay and elemental magic is inspiring." Hozumi fixed his companion with a stare. "What is your point, Miyoko-donno?"

"Those same ise zumi and Tamori shugenja who fought on the battlefields are priests to the kami. They revere the spirits. They fight alongside the bushi with the same magic used to entreat the Heavens. Does that make them odd for holding on to two such differing ideals?"

"Of course not," Hozumi replied.

Miyoko gestured to the south. "We find reverence to the Heavens where we can, Hozumi-san. Even here. The Will of Heaven created this place. We cannot turn our backs to it."

Hozumi looked once more to the south. The land still seemed desolate and destructive, no matter how hard he tried to find what Miyoko described. At least someone was able to appreciate this place, he mused. Perhaps he would never understand the ise zumi, but he was glad for their existence.



The Dragon Families: Philosophy and Theology

Aside from the Phoenix Clan, the Dragon Clan is the Great Clan most diligent in their pursuit of the arcane matters. Their ways have always been shrouded in mysticism, and at the behest of their Kami Togashi the Dragon have always served the Empire in enigmatic ways. The Dragon use magic that is not well understood by everyone outside of their lands, and they are fearless in their search for truth and Enlightenment. Even the most practical of the Dragon recognizes the importance of magic, religion, truth, and the afterlife and struggle to understand them in his own way. To the Dragon, magic and religion are as important as life itself.

The Togashi

"You cannot seek truth if you fear the fall."

The Togashi Family takes its name from the Kami that led the Dragon, yet none of them are related to the god by blood. They have all come together under the same name because they believe in following the path of Togashi. He was once viewed as the wisest of all the Kami, and those who follow in his footsteps would like to share his claim to wisdom. They came from all corners of the Empire and willingly submitted to the Dragon Champion. In return for their belief in him, Togashi marked them with magical tattoos created from his own blood.

The founding Family of the Dragon Clan is as eclectic a bunch as can be found, and it seems sometimes that each Togashi monk holds opinions that are no one's but his own on just about every matter. Some of the Togashi are descended from noble samurai, yet others were born simple peasants. Some meditate and learn the lessons of the Tao with serious dedication, yet others seem to seek Enlightenment by pranks and traveling the world. None of them condemn each other for their actions; each man, they believe, must follow his own path to Enlightenment.

Their beliefs on magic and religion are easier to describe than their actions, however. As a whole, the Togashi believe that magic is as natural as breathing air, eating when you are hungry and resting when you are weary. Many Togashi therefore acquire a blasé attitude toward the kami

and the shugenja who manipulate them to great effect. They treat the shugenja the same as they would everyone else.

They do not have a uniform view on Bushido and the samurai class. Some former samurai like Togashi Ieshige have a very clear concept of Bushido and its role in the Celestial Order. Others do not care for the class structure and treat everyone more or less as equals. Most seem to avoid it as something unnecessary in their lives. The samurai who come in contact with the Togashi on a regular basis have come to expect this and do not react outwardly to their blasphemy, as much as they might condemn them in their own minds.

The Togashi were once three separate Orders that differed by schools of thought. Even though these schools of thought have now come together under one name, one can understand these monks mostly through examination of the three former Orders. The ise zumi were the original followers of the Kami Togashi. They were the most whimsical in nature, often subjecting others to riddles and parables when queried. They did this for many reasons, not the least of which was that they enjoyed the confusion this caused among their listeners. The Togashi read the Tao as a conversation between Kami more than as a guideline of how one should live one's life. Some Togashi believed that Enlightenment must be found traveling through the Empire and simply living life. The vast majority of the ise zumi did not feel this way, yet those who did were more likely to encounter members of other Clans because of their beliefs dictated a peripatetic life, and they shaped the wider public image of the ise zumi.

The second Order was dedicated and influenced by Lady Moon. The kikage zumi once formed the Order of Hitomi. Their views on life and religion gravitated toward physical expression rather than metaphysical exploration. They honed their bodies to top form, practicing jiu-jitsu and other martial skills in their quest for Enlightenment. They were moody at best and violent at worst, and often called mad by outsiders. Unfortunately, the kikage zumi did little to dispel the stereotype. They believed that their own form of Enlightenment would appear in battle, while they exerted their muscles and lost themselves in the heat of the moment.

The third Order took their names from the Celestial Wanderer Hoshi. The tsurai zumi were always the smallest of the three Orders and never gained as many follow-

ers as the others. Perhaps the unpopularity of the Order derived from its calm, balanced outlook on life. They believed in a mixture of all things, a moderation of both the physical and the mental. They believed that Enlightenment would come to those who were able to divert their attentions to all actions without excess. They acted as mediators between the angry Hitomi and the whimsical Togashi and were often viewed as the ones most grounded in reality. They studied the Tao, lived an ascetic life in the temple and waited for the perfect moment in which all things would balance each other.

The Tamori

"You cannot see truth unless you have cleared the lies with the purity of battle."

The Tamori are the newest Family to follow the Dragon Clan and they serve as the shugenja of the Clan. They replaced the Agasha, who left the Dragon during the War Against the Darkness era in protest of what turned out to be the increasing influence of the Lying Darkness on the Champion, Hitomi. They became vassals of the Phoenix Clan and left a void within the Dragon. That void was not filled until decades later, following the War of Spirits. Agasha Tamori was granted his own Family name as part of a treaty with the spirit armies. Tamori soon fell to corruption and madness, and the current Daimyo Tamori Shaitung seized the reins of the Family and guided them with a just and fair hand.

Most Tamori study the magical arts. However, they are not the typical aloof shugenja Family. They recognize that they cannot follow the path of the bushi and do justice to the path of the shugenja. However, they believe that a samurai's duty is to serve, both in war and as a ruling class. In the eyes of the Tamori, one cannot do that unless they understand the martial aspect of life.

Because of this unique belief, the Tamori attempt to balance both the reverence of the kami and the art of war in their lives. They learn to fight with the katana and wear it proudly at their side. But the Tamori also learn to utilize many other weapons. They fight viciously in battle but do not ever forget their identity. They charge the front lines, swords and spears in hand, but call upon the kami to throw globes of fire at their enemies beforehand.

The Tamori believe in Bushido. As a whole they try their best to exemplify honesty, courage, honor, and duty. The other tenets of Bushido sometimes fall by the wayside because of their fiery temperaments, but the Tamori are quick to answer for perceived faults.

The Tamori's view on magic also seems to differ greatly from that of a normal shugenja. Most shugenja are content with learning the spells and techniques passed on by their ancestors, but the Tamori are ever inquisitive of what else can be achieved by altering the accepted methods. They constantly experiment with different materials, different techniques, and different ways of beseeching the kami. Most of these attempts fail (sometimes disastrously), yet this does not seem to discourage the determined shugenja. They try again, doggedly pursuing their goals with admirable resolve. This mindset has often served the Tamori well in the past. They have discovered many new paths that speak volumes for the versatility of magic. They have expanded the field of alchemy by leaps and bounds with misugusuri, and their research into spirit binding has uncovered startling facts about the relationship between man and kami.

The Tamori's view concerning the Tao and the Fortunes is in line with the other shugenja Families of the Empire. They devour texts based on the Tao and attempt to understand it as facets of their own lives. They revere the kami, the Fortunes, and the Celestial Heavens. Because they are able to converse with the kami the religion of the Empire has always made perfect sense to the Tamori. In that, the Tamori are quite traditional.

The Mirumoto

"You cannot serve if you do not recognize that you can only see the narrowest slice of the world."

The Mirumoto are famed throughout the Empire as founders of Niten, a dual wield technique where one fights with both a katana and the wakizashi at the same time. Those who do not know the Mirumoto would assume that these warriors would be focused on only the craft of the sword, working to hone the Niten. Those who believe that truly underestimate the Mirumoto Family.

It is true that the founder of the Family had little time or concern for the niceties of life. They say that he rarely bathed and always spoke his mind with little concern for etiquette. His main saving grace as a samurai was that he was a relentless killer on the battlefield. His technique focused on the battle itself first and foremost, with little attention to form or grace. He was the odd one out of Togashi's disciples, the one who cared little for mysticism and the nebulous future.

But the Mirumoto are now one of the most contemplative bushi Families in the empire. They do not hesitate to



strike if it is necessary, but they hold a reverence for life and the rest of the world that is uncommon among the samurai class.

The Mirumoto are great scholars because they believe one cannot attain a noble nature without learning. The Mirumoto study the Tao, Niten, the Sword, Leadership, and every other book that would help enrich his life. They adhere to Bushido more strongly than the other Dragon Families. They believe that adherence to Bushido is a major determining factor in one's worth as a samurai, and they strive to obey each tenet in all of their actions.

Their views on religion are similar to their views on Bushido. They read everything available to them and contemplate its possible effect on their lives. The Mirumoto meditate upon the teachings of the Tao constantly, seeking new truths among the tales of the Tao. Some are able to reach a new level of understanding when they analyze the Tao. They become more in tune with the Elements and the kami. These Mirumoto, called the Students of the Tao, are able to wield some of the magical powers that a shugenja or monk can wield. The Mirumoto, of

course, do not let this power go to their heads and remain humble above all.

Perhaps time spent with the Togashi and their supernatural abilities has irrevocably altered the Mirumoto. The Mirumoto are very comfortable with magic and consider it a crucial part of warfare. The Lion do not use the Kitsuki to their full abilities on the battlefield, and the Mirumoto consider it the greatest failing of their armies. Magic is a fact that cannot be denied, the Mirumoto reason. How can a man serve his lord if he refuses to use every weapon available to him? It helps their cause that the Tamori are a very martial Family. The Mirumoto philosophy and the Tamori philosophy complement each other, and the two Families often train to maximize their abilities together.

The Kitsuki

"I believe what I can see, and I can see the truth of the Tao with my own eyes."

The Kitsuki Family does not resemble the other Dragon Families upon first glance. The founder, Agasha Kitsuki, was a strange man with strange ideals. Those ideals were passed down to his Family after his heroics earned him

a Family name. The Kitsuki thrive in the present time despite constant disbelief and mockery from the other Families of the Empire. The Kitsuki ignore this ridicule and criticism.

The other Clans do not appreciate the Kitsuki and their ways because so much of what is known as the Kitsuki Method of investigation grates against long-standing custom. The rest of the Empire finds the truth of the matter through testimony. The word of a samurai by itself is evidence enough. The person with the highest station is the person who is the most reliable. If someone says it is the truth, it remains the truth until someone with higher station declares him false. When disagreements occur, the truth is determined through the rite of *iai*jutsu.

The Kitsuki, on the other hand, believe that one can determine the truth by looking at physical evidence that remains after an event. They believe that keen eyesight and a keen intellect can deduce the truth long after the event has passed, without relying on the faulty memory of a human. Any human (even a samurai) is fallible and capable of lying. The truth of the matter should be evident, no matter who says what about it.

Most samurai see this as disrespectful, for obvious reasons. The tenet *Makoto*, or sincerity, stresses that a samurai must tell the truth. To assume that a samurai may not be telling the truth is a personal insult in this context. In the larger picture, making an official assumption that a samurai cannot be trusted to adhere absolutely to Bushido might weaken its hold over the samurai class. The Kitsuki Method removes absolute trust in Bushido from magisterial investigation (and truth-finding in general). The Kitsuki honor Bushido in all other ways, but the Kitsuki Method itself is designed to counter what they see as flaws in the assumption behind Bushido.

Likewise, the Kitsuki's understanding of Enlightenment and the meaning of religion is influenced by trust in what they can sense and verify. They read the Tao and attempt to analyze it in terms of concrete phenomena in the world around them. They value fact and evidence over fable and myth. They believe in the Tao and the Fortunes because evidence of their existence is everywhere. The kami speak to man, the Elemental Dragons appear to the worthy, and their Clan was led for centuries by a god. It is hard to disbelieve in the face of that much evidence.



However, the Kitsuki do not have a happy relationship with magic. In fact, they see magic as one of the greatest enemies of the Kitsuki Method. The power of the kami is such that a skilled shugenja can alter reality to his will. Evidence and the ways to find evidence are lessened significantly when one cannot rely on them to always be correct. Often, investigations must end because of magical interference. The Kitsuki are currently trying to find ways to solve this riddle. They have begun collaboration with the Tamori Family that they hope will put an end to their problems.

Religion and the Life of a Dragon

The Dragon are famous for their spirituality. Perhaps it is unavoidable that they would immerse themselves in contemplation and the otherworldly, given their geography. The Mirumoto and Kitsuki lands boast some farmlands but that is far from the norm for the Dragon. A great portion of their lands is nestled in to the rocky and perilous mountains of Rokugan's northern border. Nature is not kind to these lands, where harsh weather and other pitfalls can turn against the people in an instant. It is natural to turn to higher powers that might control nature against them.

The Dragon take the occasion to celebrate every major festival that occurs during the Rokugani calendar. Even the most minor festival is acknowledged in some way among the northern mountains. However, the Dragon must ever be practical. Their festivals are rarely as opulent as their counterparts in the rest of the Empire. Some of these festivals are simply acknowledged by an hour or two of rest from work, and several minutes spent praying to the Fortunes in whose honor they celebrated. Harvest is small in the Dragon lands because of the huge amounts of unusable land, so the peasants must work doubly so to maintain their lives.

Important Superstitions

While superstitions are important to the Dragon, the heimin take them much more seriously than most of the samurai. The more playful Togashi monks will make a game of spreading superstitions as a way of seeing how

much influence they could have on others. They do not mean harm by this game, but some of the superstitions that originate from the mind of a Togashi have persisted over centuries.

Many of the superstitions that exist in the Empire are considered frivolous and a waste of time by the Dragon elite. There are so many real threats and portents to be wary of, the Dragon say, that worrying about the disposition of a spider seems almost blasphemous by comparison.

But the peasants of the Dragon believe in many superstitions that range from the serious to the playful. This is in part because the ise zumi have spread so many ideas into their hearts that they begin to believe some of them. For instance, the peasants believe that rain after sunset is an omen of ill events for the next day, and they will travel more cautiously the next day. But Dragon samurai who are familiar with it generally suspect that it descended from the mind of a tricky Togashi long ago.

All Dragon do indulge in one form of superstition. Kaware, a form of folk magic divination, is extremely popular in the Clan. The magic relies upon six lined figures called hexagrams that are randomly cast among ceremonial pieces. Where the pieces fall and in what formation are interpreted to reveal the future.

A Routine Day

For a peasant, life is not easy. There is always something that needs to be finished, something that always needs to be done so that they could cultivate as much food as they can. That said, the peasants of the Dragon lands are quite devout and spend as much time on religion as they can.

When the peasant wakes up, he begins his day by praying to the Fortune of Agriculture, Kuroshin. After several minutes of devout prayer, he eats breakfast with his family before a long day of work. He goes out to the fields to work in the rice paddies or goes to clear the mountains of dead trees and brush. For the next several grueling, hard working hours, he has little time to contemplate anything but his work. Once his tasks are done for the day, he can return home and rest.

On lucky days a monk will visit the village, and the peasant listens to the tales of the ise zumi. Often they are simple tales, but they will also read the Tao to the villagers. After dinner, he must retire early so that he can start anew early the next day. Because of his hard and demanding schedule the peasant cannot devote any more time to

religion. He directs most of his attention to the Fortune of Agriculture, as Kuroshin controls his livelihood.

A monk has fewer chores on his hands than a peasant, but he holds himself to a schedule that is just as strict as that of a working man. He wakes up and meditates for an hour before breakfast, getting himself ready to face the day. After eating, he will tend to some housekeeping around the temple or domicile. He will sweep the floor, clean the gardens, and tend to the statues and incense. After these chores, he will meditate for several hours upon the Tao, often in a meditation chamber. After his meditation he will either converse with his peers or set himself to another chore or task. After another hour, he will meditate once more or strengthen his body with intense martial training.

A samurai begins his day with a ritualistic kata that reminds him of the martial aspects of his life. After the kata, he will pray to his ancestors that he will prove himself honorable to them. He eats then rises up to tend to his duties. These duties range from anything from guard duty, training at the dojo, attending to his duties as a magistrate, and many other tasks that depend on the samurai's job. What little time he has is devoted to studying ancient tasks or practicing his kata once more.

The Tao of Shinsei and Enlightenment

The people of the Dragon revere the Tao as the foundation of the Empire's religion and they make sure that knowledge of the Tao is widespread among their lands. Ise zumi and other samurai often travel to villages in the Dragon lands just to spread word of the Tao. Peasants, children and adults alike, gather to listen to the wisdom placed within those books. Some ise zumi claim that the questions the peasants pose them offer a better understanding of the Tao than a week spent in contemplation.

But at the same time, it must be said that only the samurai class has the time to contemplate the concept of Enlightenment, and even then, only the Togashi seem to give it much thought. The Kitsuki Family spends very little time contemplating Enlightenment. The Mirumoto Family believes that to pursue Enlightenment is a silly idea that defeats its own purpose. The Tamori slowly live their lives with Enlightenment as the distant goal. It is always on their minds, yet it does not consume their lives. The monks of the Togashi Family spend their entire lives in search of it with many various techniques, though they certainly seem to be enjoying their path toward it.

During the reign of Toturi III, the advent of the Keepers of the Five Rings brought forth a wave of understanding throughout the Empire. Many samurai reached Enlightenment. Many decried the Togashi Family, stating that though the Togashi constantly searched for Enlightenment only a handful of them ever reached it. The Togashi are surprisingly at ease with these generalizations and do not seem to care at all that others have reached Enlightenment. One of the greatest truisms of the Tao is that each man must find his own path towards Enlightenment, and the Togashi understand that this is not their way. Some even believe that their search for Enlightenment is actually Enlightenment itself.

The reaction of the rest of the Dragon Clan remains similar across the board. They are glad that others have reached Enlightenment, but it has very little to concern them. Some of the more pious members find themselves ill at ease with the vanity some people showed in flaunting the status of their Clans. Most kept those thoughts to themselves to avoid giving offense, however.

The Spirits and the Spirit Realms

It is quite evident that spirit creatures are real. Every peasant knows that with every part of his soul, and superstitions and rituals are a way with coping with their uncontrollable and unpredictable actions. They do not know the source of the spirits, and some even concoct stories to explain them. In the end, however, they do not truly care where the spirits come from as long as they leave ordinary folk alone.

The Dragon lands are subject to many spirits because of the strength of the kami in the area. The peasants are forced to deal with trickster spirits from Sakkaku, among many other things. Even zokujin look like spirits from another realm, and they have existed among the Dragon for centuries. As a whole, the Dragon Clan samurai treat spirit creatures with respect. They believe that showing proper respect to the spirits shows respect to the Celestial Order.

The Kitsuki are uncomfortably aware of the spirits and the spirit realms. Their constantly inquisitive nature has landed many of their samurai in dire straits. Spirits are not a logical explanation for the events of the Empire and following their trail to the portals between the spirit realms leads to disastrous results. Many Kitsuki have died cruel deaths in the distant spirit realms.

The Mirumoto accept the existence of the spirit realms calmly. They know that spirits visit Ningen-do, but they also know that there is little they can do to slow or stop their arrival. They simply take the actions of the spirits in stride and protect their interests. If they become aware of some actions they can take to right some wrong (by perhaps returning an animal to its rightful nest or by appeasing the ghosts at a former battlefield), the Mirumoto will do their best to fulfill those conditions.

Spirits from other realms amuse the Togashi more than anything else. It is a taste of whimsy in an otherwise normal world. A famous tale states that an ise zumi ran across a mujina from Sakkaku. When confronted with its pranks and silly tales, the ise zumi countered with pranks of his own. The mujina fled once he realized there was nothing he could do to ruffle the Togashi's calm. While the literal truth of this story has never been confirmed, given the disposition of the strange Family, it is not all that implausible.

The Tamori understand the spirit realms better than everyone else, and they even understand the why they are

connected to Ningen-do. When a Tamori shugenja come across an aberration or an inhabitant of another spirit realm, he will take it upon himself to immediately set out to banish it, returning it to its rightful place.

Temples of the Dragon Lands

The temples and shrines in the Dragon lands run the gamut from austere to ostentatious. Some of them are small, personal things while a few are respectable rivals anything found outside of the mountains. Some are easily accessible while others remain well-kept secrets from all but a few minds. Perhaps this dichotomy is yet another symbol of the eclectic people of the Dragon, who do not mind being an enigma to outsiders.

Monasteries, temples, and shrines fill every available space in their lands and it is the rare Dragon village that does not have some establishment dedicated to the worship of the kami. These places honoring the higher powers are often humble yet heartfelt, with little decoration but those that are intended to offer homage to the Fortunes. Most temples found in the Dragon lands will never match



the grandeur and size of those found within the rest of the Empire. It is very difficult to manage frills and decorations in the mountains, where they are subject to harsh weather and many other pitfalls. The temples in Toshi Ranbo, for instance, dwarf nearly all of the locations listed below. However, the monks that tend to these temples do so with heartfelt enthusiasm and fervent belief in the power and importance of their duties. That conviction is rarely matched by those who live beneath the peaks of the mountains of the Dragon.

It is not the intent of the people of the Dragon to create large monuments to the higher powers. However, because of the monks' reverence toward them, no outsider has ever found a Dragon temple wanting. In the end, that is the most important portion of any shrine: the aura of tranquility, the power of peace, and the sense that one can connect with the rest of the universe.

THE HIGH HOUSE OF LIGHT

The capital of the Dragon Clan has changed names several times down through the centuries. When it was first built at the dawn of the Empire, it was called Kyuden To-

gashi. When Hitomi became the new leader of the Clan after the Second Day of Thunder, she christened it Kyuden Hitomi. After she ascended to the Celestial Heavens as Lady Moon, the leadership of the Dragon Clan back returned to the Togashi Family, and for several decades, the castle was known simultaneously as Kyuden Togashi and Kyuden Hitomi by its inhabitants. Some referred to the castle as both names interchangeably even in the same conversation. Visitors to the castle, afraid of offending either of the monk Families, called the castle the High House of Light.

An imbalance in the Celestial Heavens brought about the end of both the Hitomi and Hoshi Families during the year 1169. The monks of the Hitomi and Hoshi Families abandoned their orders and swore fealty to the Togashi Family. However, in recognition of those two Families, Togashi Satsu swore that the castle would be called the High House of Light instead of Kyuden Togashi in honor of all the monks who were once of different orders.

Regardless of the name, the High House of Light has always remained an impressive structure. The castle was built directly on the face of the largest mountain in the



range. It can be seen for miles around, a shining emblem of civilization and society in the wilderness. The interior is just as impressive, filled with countless shrines, temples, and rooms built for meditation. Each one is dedicated to another Fortune or spirit. The monks of the castle also maintain beautiful gardens so that one could relax among nature if one chose to do so.

The lowest levels of the High House of Light are a series of cramped passageways carved into the mountain that were once used as storage. After the formation of the Hitomi order, many monks began to occupy these passageways and form small shrines where they saw fit. These shrines are unmarked but none of the monks seem to have any trouble recognizing to whom those shrines are dedicated. The caretakers of these passageways keep it lit and accessible all through the night, in case a worshipper decides to make homage after the moon has risen. In fact, more people visit these shrines at night than during the day. None of the monks seem to be bothered by the claustrophobic nature of some of these shrines, chalking it up to a reflection of the brooding kikaze zumi.

The middle levels of the High House of Light are the most accessible and most used portions of the castle. One can find temples to each of the major Fortunes in the first few levels of the castle. There is also a temple dedicated to each of the Kami except for Togashi, who found it a grave hubris to have one of himself in his own home, and Fu Leng. During construction, the Dragon founder also commissioned an unnamed temple of the same size and grandeur. In recent years, it has been discovered that the temple was dedicated to their fallen brother Ryoshun.

These temples are the most ostentatious of the entire Dragon lands; gold decorates many surfaces, paintings from some of the greatest artists in Rokugan's history hang on the walls, and a giant statue stands in the middle of each temple. Perhaps the temples are constructed in such a fashion to appease the visitors who might view these temples. No samurai could take offense at the honor shown to their Clan founders.

The highest levels of the High House of Light are sparse and austere. There are fewer shrines than could be found among the lower and middle levels of the castle. The majority of the structures in the highest levels consist of meditation chambers on platforms chiseled out of the mountainside. These meditation chambers are very simple, consisting of little more than open space and scrolls of the Tao. These chambers are open to the power of the ele-

ments. Monks use these meditation chambers even when the weather turns violent, as it does often so high in the mountains. Ise zumi are expected to keep to a daily ritual of meditation in these chambers, even through the worst snowstorm.

Fukurokujin Seido

The shrine to the Fortune of Longevity has become something of an ironic footnote in the history of the Empire. It is a place of holy devotion to one of the greatest Fortunes of the Empire. The monks tend to it with care and love for their work, and these monks are some of the most pious in the Empire. However, the surrounding area has become a hotbed of sin and debauchery as others drew closer to take advantage of those who would visit the holy place.

Fukurokujin Seido was constructed at the top of a high peak, built around the largest shrine to Fukurokujin in Rokugan and one of the largest shrines to any of the Fortune. In the first century after its construction, the shrine remained inaccessible to most people. There were no well-beaten paths or roads to the place. However, after many years of fame and determined outsiders laboring up the mountainside, the monks built large stone steps to help the pilgrims find the way.

Fukurokujin Seido boasts a strange yet wonderful tradition. Visitors to the shrine are heavily encouraged to create something — anything — as a material a symbol of shrine's blessing on those who would visit it. These crafts are often very simple things that can be created on the journey or during one's brief time at the shrine. The monks graciously accept little wooden carvings. If the monks can sense the heartfelt devotion of the piece, the caretakers give it as much attention as a jade statue donated by a wealthy visitor. Many artists create paintings, armor, or other decorations inspired by how Fukurokujin has affected their lives. Then they travel to the famed shrine to add their work to the growing collection. The collection has drawn critical acclaim from historians, and many people visit the shrine to simply view the collection rather than worship the Fortune. Though that is not the goal of the collection, the monks of the shrine accept it as a reality and do not ask for crafts from those mere curiosity-seekers.

The temple of Fukurokujin consists of several large buildings placed next to a statue of the Fortune. Every century or so, the monks of the place must find the room for another building in the peak to house the crafts pil-

grims have created over the years. The shrine does not have much else to boast; the monks keep the wide clearances clean and they sweep the steps each day.

After the foundation of the shrine, a village formed at the mountain's foot to supply those who live at Fukurokujin Seido and to entertain the pilgrims. Over the years, this village has become a hive of crime that has grown unchecked. Bandit gangs, undercover Scorpion agents, and unruly con men crowd the small village with gambling games, illegal drugs, false trinkets said to be taken from the halls of Fukurokujin, and much more deceitful activity. The close proximity of this hotbed of evil bothers the monks, yet it is beyond their control. Kitsuki magistrates attempt to curtail the crimes near this area, but it requires constant effort. Each time they break up some criminal gang, another rises in its place. The money that pours into this village is too great a lure for criminals to resist, and it seems like this villainy near the sacred temple will always exist.

Mountain Home Temple

This small and unassuming temple is home of some of the greatest Tamori shugenja, yet one would never be able to surmise it from its appearance. Mountain Home Temple has no frills, nothing that distinguishes it from many other temples and monasteries in the area. In fact, the only notable thing about this temple from first glance is its location. It is one of the only temples located near Shiro Tamori and the only one that is owned and operated by the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

When the Tamori came to occupy the former Agasha lands, they did not have enough men to maintain everything that lay within its domain. The leader of the Tamori invited the Brotherhood of Shinsei to reside in the Mountain Home Temple and aid in its everyday operations.

Mountain Home Temple runs much like a typical temple of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. It is very peaceful and quiet, with a focus on serenity brought on by contact with nature and attention to mundane matters. Only a few monks run the temple and each person does his share of work to make sure the temple is kept ready.

The Tamori shugenja established a dojo for their magical students within the temple grounds. They take care to follow the rules of the Brotherhood and to maintain a cordial relationship with them. The shugenja are treated on the most part as any other monk; a Tamori must help with the chores as with everyone else, and samurai status

means nothing once you are a part of the dojo. Everyone is treated with respect, of course, but more importantly everyone is treated equally.

The Tamori dojo is placed next to the main shrine of the temple. The Brotherhood never interferes with their space and never snoops into the Tamori matters. Because of this courtesy, the Tamori curtail the more martial aspects of their training. Yamabushi sensei reside at Mountain Home Temple Dojo, yet most of their military training happens at the dojo of Shiro Tamori. Here, the Tamori instead learn more about alchemy, herbalism, and the balance between the Elements.

The Northern Towers of Flame

When Tamori, Dark Oracle of Fire, was destroyed, a new Dark Oracle picked up his title and his desire for vengeance against the Dragon Clan. He was banished from Rokugan by an ancient nemuranai and his helplessness only fueled his anger toward the Dragon. He began to use the Yobanjin tribes north of Rokugan to enact his vengeance, altering them into fiery abominations and sending them south to destroy the Dragon. Once the Mirumoto caught wind of this scheme, they immediately enacted measures to defend the Empire from these creatures under the Dark Oracle's bidding.

They created five watchtowers along the northern border of Rokugan, using the watchtowers of the Kaiu Wall as a model of efficient military construction. These towers watch the northern border for these creatures and immediately eliminate them before they pose a threat to the rest of the Empire. The watchtowers are arranged for easy mutual support, allowing reinforcements from one to be rushed to another, so that the enemy cannot overwhelm one portion of their defense. An entire legion of the Dragon army, supported by additional Tamori shugenja, is permanently stationed at the towers, vigilantly watching for the Dark Oracle's minions, with another legion based within a day's march.

At the core of the Northern Towers of Flame lie the Flames of Purity. It is thanks to these Flames that the Dragon Clan is able to react almost instantly to any incursion from the Dark Oracle. The Flames of Purity were created by the Tamori and reflect the raw power of Tamori's Furnace. The volcano that once erupted so violently at the Dark Oracle's bidding now serves as a warning of his arrival. The Flames of Purity can sense the presence Shadowlands Taint within several miles. The flames begin



to flicker and dim as the source of the Taint approaches, and nearly extinguishes if it is of great strength. The Tamori shugenja analyzing the strength and duration of the flickering to determine the exact path and strength of the enemy.

Each Flame of Purity serves also as a miniature shrine to the kami of Fire that live under Tamori's Furnace. What could serve as a testament to the spiritual strength of the Empire better than an ever pure, ever burning light? The Tamori and Mirumoto alike pray to these fires and hope that one day that the Dark Oracle's threat will cease, and that they will no longer require these fires as a military tool. However, as long as the Dark Oracle continues to draw breath, the Dragon recognize that wish as simply a dream and soldier on with their duty.

Shiro Kitsuki

Shiro Kitsuki is highly accessible to the rest of the Empire compared to the other Dragon castles. The castle lies at the foot of a large climb that leads the way to the High House of Light. Its other name, Last Step Castle, derives

from the fact that visitors cannot expect shelter after they leave Shiro Kitsuki if they intend to move on toward the Dragon Clan Champion's home. Because so many visitors come to this castle, the Dragon have made an effort to make this place accommodating.

At the beginning, Shiro Kitsuki was not intended to become a castle. It supported only a small barracks, and only a few guard towers to defend it. Once Agasha Kitsuki was awarded these lands, however, he wished to create a place that could serve as the diplomatic face of the Dragon to the rest of the Empire. He felt that the fact that courtiers from other Clans were forced to unwillingly undergo a series of tests and trials to even talk to the Dragon Clan Champion only engendered negative attitudes toward the Dragon. With this thought in mind, he created what he considered a gateway into the rest of the Dragon Mountains.

Shiro Kitsuki is physically unimpressive. It is small and unassuming, even by Dragon standards. The garrison is small, less than a full legion, not nearly enough to hold off a major invasion from any of the Dragon's neighbors,

especially the Lion. However, Shiro Kitsuki's defenses are not so easily destroyed. Special Tamori magic protects the castle from insidious infiltration and assassins. The walls react violently to those who try to scale them, ejecting them from their perches and flinging them back down to their deaths. The area around the castle has likewise been enchanted, allowing the Kitsuki to trigger deadly traps from the safety of their castle.

Shiro Kitsuki is not self sufficient, unlike the castle of the Dragon shugenja. They import food and other materials to supply the dojo with everything they need for training. Many assassins and spies attempt to infiltrate the place under their very eyes, but the Kitsuki are well trained to spot such shenanigans and intercept them as they enter.

The two most important features of Shiro Kitsuki have nothing to do with military matters, however. One is that Shiro Kitsuki is fully equipped with the amenities courtiers from other lands expect to receive while in the care of another Clan. The Kitsuki purchase the finest sake and tea of the Empire and liberally serve them to visitors. The guest quarters are quite comfortable and the Kitsuki courtiers are well trained to interact with them according to the highest ideals of etiquette and hospitality.

The second feature is the Dojo of the Open Eye, located right next to the castle. There the famed Kitsuki Investigators hone their skills, learning to spot lies and poison as well as the next magistrate. The sensei teach their students the famed Kitsuki Method, a technique of investigation that incorporates physical evidence as well as testimony to find out the truth of a matter.

Until recently, the Kitsuki did not receive much attention from the rest of the Dragon Clan for the Kitsuki Method.

After all, it was a technique that does not draw much attention or recognition from the rest of the Empire. However, the Kitsuki Daimyo reached out to the Tamori for aid in further develop-



ing the Method. One of the greatest failings of the Kitsuki Method, he theorized, was that any shugenja with control of the Elements could completely destroy any remnants of evidence left at the scene of the crime. Without shugenja skilled enough to know what to look for, a criminal aided by magic would escape justice. After some deliberation, the Tamori accepted the Kitsuki's offer and sent a handful of shugenja to learn the Kitsuki Method.

The collaboration started off at a rocky start, as neither the Tamori nor the Kitsuki knew how to make their techniques mesh. However, the Tamori have begun to finally incorporate the Kitsuki Method in their ways and have solved several cases involving ronin shugenja that would have otherwise been left unsolved. Both the Tamori and the Kitsuki have been encouraged by these results, and they are eager to continue on the work.

The temple at Shiro Kitsuki was constructed by the Tamori shugenja once they began to live at the castle. It is a monument to the great spirit of Earth that resides within the Dragon Mountains. The Kitsuki do not know why the shugenja chose that Element to honor, as their work involves Air more than anything else. The Tamori have not offered any explanation and simply carry on their worship. The Kitsuki are happy to make their shugenja brethren feel at home and stand by without comment.

Shiro Tamori

Shiro Tamori receives the least number of visitors among all of the major castles of the Dragon lands. This isolation stems from several factors. It is quite difficult to reach the castle, though there are others that present a far larger hassle to visitors. The High House of Light, for instance, is further away from the rest of the Empire and does not have roads leading to the place. However, the High House of Light receives more visitors because the Dragon Clan Champion resides there. The fact that the Tamori Daimyo resides in the castle does little to draw attention to this small castle. The reputation of the Tamori as inhospitable also deters possible guests. Most people will do their best to avoid this place.

Despite its bad reputation, however, the castle is not without modest attractions for the few visitors who make the trip. The Agasha, predecessors of the Tamori, called the place home and embellished it with their own touches. Over the decades since the Agasha's defection from the Dragon, the Tamori have added their own decorations to the place. Fundamentally, however, the castle remains the

same as it was a thousand years ago. The castle was constructed at the foot of Fire Tooth Mountain, and the architects used the mountain to shape the castle's defenses in a way that made later improvement almost unnecessary.

The castle is very large and its walls envelop a self-sufficient village. The inhabitants of Shiro Tamori are able to create almost everything the castle needs. Food is difficult to farm in the middle of the mountain range yet the people manage to produce enough. A single road leads up to the castle and connects Shiro Tamori to the other Tamori holdings, yet at the same time, it is sufficiently restrictive to make any approach by a hostile army laborious.

The few outsiders who approach the castle are surprised at first sight. Shiro Tamori resembles a bushi Family's castle more than the home of a shugenja Family. Samurai drill in the yards, performing kata together at sunrise. The Tamori set aside space for training with the katana and other martial weapons. The Yamabushi, the militant wing of the Tamori Family, train so that they can prevail in physical combat if their magical powers are exhausted or otherwise unavailable.

It is customary to keep one legion of Mirumoto bushi at the castle to train at the side of the Yamabushi. This serves two purposes. The Mirumoto share their expertise as warriors with the Yamabushi, and the two learn to cooperate on the battlefield. Their goal is to fight together as one, and the coordination between these two very different arms of the military has thrown more than one enemy off guard.

Shiro Tamori is also home to several small temples within the castle walls. These temples, dedicated to the kami, are often frequented by shugenja and bushi alike. After training, bushi and Yamabushi often come to the temple together to meditate as one. They feel that this adherence to the kami and to the martial spirit strengthens the soul of the samurai. Katana hang along the walls of the temples, yet these weapons add to the atmosphere of veneration of the kami rather than destroy it.

The interior of the castle itself is not terribly impressive. There are few frills or decorations. The paintings that once hung on the walls were taken by the Agasha as they fled the Dragon lands and the Tamori have done little to replace them. A shrine to Bishamon sits in the middle of the castle and is frequented daily by most of the non-shugenja who live within the castle.

Beneath the castle in the heart of the mountain lies the Agasha Foundries. The Agasha were unable to move

the scrolls of research and materials of crafting in their haste to leave. When the Tamori took over, they found the Foundries completely intact and functional. They read through the work of the Agasha and realized that it would be negligent of them to allow this work to fall by the wayside. They took up the work and have added valuable insights to the knowledge of herbalism, potion crafting, and smithing. These works are valuable and highly confidential, and only a handful of very trusted individuals outside of the Tamori Family are allowed to enter the Foundries. Few choose to do so, as the Foundries are small and very claustrophobic. The shugenja who frequent the Foundries do not feel discomforted by the cramped quarters, however, and instead feel quite at ease in the deep underground workspace.

The Foundries double as a large temple for all the Tamori shugenja. The Tamori, ever practical, find that working hard calms the soul as much as meditation. The Tamori prefer constant motion and constant discovery over sitting and pondering one's actions. Thus, the Tamori view the experimentation conducted in the Foundries as an important asset to their spiritual well being. There is no space underground for temples and shrines, yet the shugenja who work there feel that they constantly commune with the kami through their creative testing of the Elements. They respect and revere the earth that surrounds them and the materials that keep their research going.

Suigeki Toshi

Located within the Tamori lands, Water Hammer City is a place that never rests. The sound of hard work rings through the air long after the sun has set. The people who live within the city are smiths of great skill, capable of creating beautiful weapons and armor. They create everything that the Clan needs, tirelessly toiling in front of the blazing forge to master their craft. The Tamori will never forget that they were once pioneers in smithing. A Dragon was responsible for the creation of the modern katana and the methods of forging such a strong weapon. They will not rest, constantly reworking and revising their techniques to find out an improvement to their art.

When the Agasha still lived among the Dragon, they called this city Kanashiki no Yama Toshi, the City of the Mountain's Anvil. However, since their departure the Tamori have developed a new method of smithing that is uniquely Tamori. The city's master smith, Tamori Hiroko, has created katana that rival those created by some of the greatest smiths in the history of the Dragon Clan. The

technique, a new method of smithing that calls upon the power of the Water kami to help shape and strengthen the weapon, is constantly tested and retested to see if it can be improved.

The heart of the city becomes clear from first glance. Almost every single building in Suigeki Toshi contains vents that emit thick smoke from their hidden forges. The ringing of hammers echoes through each street. Despite the forges that dot the city, the city is cleaner than anyone would expect. The smiths make it a point to keep their buildings meticulously clean, spending hours on end washing away the residue of their work to maintain a beautiful exterior.

Visitors who can sense the kami would be surprised at the intense gathering of the Elemental spirits in the little city. After all, it looks to be a city of smiths, not priests. However, the spirits are lively and quick to respond for a mile around Suigeki Toshi and inside the city itself. Because the technique relies so heavily on the Water kami, the citizens of Suigeki Toshi are very careful to maintain a positive relationship with their local Water spirits. Each smith meticulously maintains a small shrine to the Water kami within his own building. Most of the shrines are small simple monuments created by the smith himself. This devotion and precision honors and pleases the local kami, and the city has formed into a powerful focus of Elemental magic.

Few outsiders are allowed inside the smiths' working spaces and thus almost no one ever sees the personal shrines. They are instead directed to a small building on the outskirts of town that houses a temple to the Fortunes. While it is well kept, it has no special features that draw attention and certainly could not draw the kami to the city in such a grand fashion. Shugenja from other Clans leave the city with the mystery of the lively spirits unsolved.

The Tamori Gardens

Once the war against the Phoenix Clan drew to a close, the Tamori focused their efforts on growth over destruction. They traveled to a valley north of their castle, hidden from the rest of the Empire with only a single path to connect it with civilization. The valley had remained untouched for centuries before the Tamori ever laid sight on the land. It was a beautiful valley, full of vegetation and life that was naturally sustained by an underwater spring. However, the eruption of Tamori's Furnace laid waste to half of the valley. The Tamori set out to cure that destruction and used whatever forces they had to restore it to its former glory.



The Tamori communed with the Earth kami to make it sustain life once more. They imported trees, roots, vines, and all sorts of vegetation from other parts of the Dragon Mountains. They carefully cultivated this new land with a mixture of magic and pure, physical hard work. After several years of labor the land was once more beautiful.

After the restoration of the land, the Tamori realized that they could use this garden to their own benefit. Ever practical, the Tamori brought roots and plants that were central to their arcane arts and cultivated them among that garden. The Tamori still carefully watch over this land to make sure that it thrives.

The Tamori came to the center of the gardens as one to make one final ritual. They constructed a shrine to the Fortune of Agriculture, Kuroshin, within the heart of the gardens. They felt that a building of wood and stone would feel foreign in this haven of vegetation and life, so they used all of their magic to create the shrine out of vines, trees, and roots. From a distance, the shrine simply looks like an unkempt building, but it is a true marvel of the Tamori. Several Tamori travel to the Gardens each week to check not only its progress, but the health of the

shrine as well. They do not wish to upset the Fortune so they take extra care about the health of the shrine.

It is decidedly odd to pray at the shrine to Kuroshin. The healthy grass at the pilgrim's feet is moist and feels alive. Every shugenja who prays there claims that he feels a closer link to the Tamori lands. When problems plague a Tamori shugenja, he will often take refuge at the gardens, far from the rest of civilization.

An odd side effect of the Tamori's meddling with the area is the absolute lack of animals within the lands. No wolves, no birds, or even vermin call the Gardens home, and the absence of the sound of wildlife is unsettling. This absence has even caused an ecological problem within the Garden because the flowers and other vegetation that rely on animals to pollinate cannot grow. The Tamori currently increase the health of those plants through magical means, but they grow more and more worried over the future of their Garden.

Tamori Seido

Perhaps the greatest shame of the Tamori Family lies with the secret of their founder. Tamori was once a great man

and a noble shugenja, but his experiences during the War of Spirits and the Shadowlands Taint he contracted during the March to Volternum mixed to create a true villain. Tamori became the Dark Oracle of Fire and engineered a war between the Dragon and the Phoenix to punish his former Clan. With the help of both Dragon and Phoenix shugenja Tamori was killed, but his legacy continues to haunt Dragon shugenja today.

Tamori Shaitung, the Dark Oracle's daughter, was instrumental in the death of her father. She has vowed to never forgive and never forget the atrocities her father committed. After his death, she created a small chamber within the heart of Fire Tooth Mountain as a reminder of everything Tamori did. This chamber exists only by magical will, and it has no entrance or exit. Only a true master of Earth magic would be able to find the way to Tamori Seido, the smallest shrine in Dragon lands. A handful of shugenja know the secret and have sworn never to release it to anyone else.

Tamori Seido is very simple. It is a small chamber heated by the heart of the mountain. It has no decorations and it needs none. A funeral urn sits in the middle of the room. A small meditation mat lies in front of it. The shrine is only big enough to accommodate three people at one time, but no two shugenja have ever traveled to the shrine at the same time. Tamori Shaitung travels to the shrine to meditate and reflect upon the crimes of her father and what they have done to her people. It is also one of the only places she knows is completely secure from prying eyes, and she occasionally comes to the chamber to plan in privacy.

The ancestral blades of Agasha lie in a stand against the wall. Though these blades were honored for centuries before Tamori ever laid eyes upon them, the association with the Dark Oracle of Fire churns Shaitung's stomach. Tamori rarely used the blades and Shaitung has verified that they contain no traces of the Taint. Still, she is very reluctant to bring it back to Rokugan. Perhaps, she vows, it will simply lie here forever as testament to her father's crimes.

Strangely for a shrine to a Tainted criminal, Tamori Seido exudes a sense of peace and tranquility. Few sounds travel into the heart of the mountain. Utter silence is an alien sensation to most people, yet it is quite conducive to meditation. The Earth kami around the shrine can sense the devotion of Tamori Shaitung and her reverence to the Earth, so they protect the chamber with all of their powers.

Wrath of the Kami

Tamori's Furnace is at once a great geological marvel and a burden to the Dragon. The Dragon have known of the volcano's existence ever since they moved to these mountains, but they never imagined it would cause so much devastation; it was this volcano that erupted and drove the Dragon from their lands at the behest of the Dark Oracle of Fire Tamori, causing the war against the Phoenix. The Tamori cannot undo the past, but now that they understand the volcano's power, they have vowed to channel it and make use of it. They created both a shrine and a dojo at the foot of the volcano with the intent to watch, use, and channel the power of Tamori's Furnace.

The volcano has once more gone dormant, but the Tamori are not willing to take a chance that it will stay that way forever. The Wrath of the Kami is one of the largest shrines built by the Tamori at the lip of the volcano. It follows the lip in a semi circle with several buildings that contain magical means to measure the Furnace. The shrine forms many of these buildings; however, they contain no incense and no representation of the Furnace. They require no statue, for any pilgrim who wishes to pray to the Fire kami can simply view and feel the volcano's heat by kneeling in the shrine.

Some of the other buildings contain a series of scrolls that hang on each wall. They depict the life of Tamori; his rise as the Agasha Daimyo, his heroics, and his eventual fall into corruption and evil. These paintings are not of high quality, as they were created only by Tamori shugenja, not practiced artisans. However, the heartfelt devotion and passion in the paintings are palpable.

The Dragon's Heart Dojo is a home for the Tamori shugenja who want to continue on the work of the Agasha. Despite the destruction visited by the eruption of the volcano, the Tamori were able to recover many of the objects that lay at the heart of the previous dojo. They reclaimed the ancient forge of the former dojo nearly intact. The Tamori shugenja repaired the forge took and began to train in the art of creating weapons and armor once more.

The last third of the Wrath of the Kami is arguably the most important project that the Tamori have ever accomplished so far. Within one of the buildings of the Wrath of the Kami shrine, one sealed off to the general public, a path leads down from the face of the mountain toward its center. The path leads to a natural chamber at the heart of the mountain itself. When one stands inside this chamber, one can visibly see the magma of the volcano boiling in silent

fury. This secret is vigilantly kept by the Mirumoto and Tamori involved with the Wrath of the Kami, and no outsider has ever penetrated this secret. The Mirumoto bring dangerous nemuranai to the core of the mountain and destroy them in a complex ritual performed by the Tamori. Once the components of the artifact have been destroyed, the spirits of the weapon release into the chamber and must be destroyed by the shugenja. Some of the released spirits are grateful for the aid and wish to demonstrate their gratitude to the Dragon. These kami are bound to the spirits of one of the willing shugenja in the ritual, strengthening his connection to the Elements and powering his spells. While that binding occurs very rarely, these shugenja go on to serve their Clan with dignity and honor.

Masters of Magic: The Dragon

TAMORI AOKI, FOLLOWER OF THE METHOD

Air: 4 **Earth:** 2 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 2 **Void:** 3
Intelligence: 4

Honor: 2.9 **Status:** 1.5 **Glory:** 1.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Tamori Shugenja 2/Tamori Follower of the Method

ADVANTAGES: Heartless

DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial, Black Sheep

SKILLS: Athletics 1, Defense 3, Divination 2, Instruction (Investigation) 3, Investigation (Search, Notice) 6, Kenjutsu 1, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 5, Meditation 5, Theology 3

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Burst, By the Light of Lady Moon, Call Upon the Wind*, Force of Will*, Path to Inner Peace, Secrets on the Wind, Tempest of Air*, Way of Deception

Tamori Aoki never felt like he meshed with his fellow Dragon. He did not enjoy the same games in which the other Dragon samurai children reveled. He studied the scrolls inside Dragon libraries long after the others had turned to play. He kept his emotions close to his chest and never laughed out loud or raised his voice. No one truly understood him, he felt, and he slowly isolated himself from the rest of his peers. He knew that he was different and he had no desire to fit in. His parents despaired,

thinking that their child was somehow cursed. Many of his sensei at the Tamori Shugenja School felt the same way. Could it be that he could not relate to others? Did he have no emotions? No one could divine the truth, and few people cared about the unfriendly young man.

Aoki continued to watch his peers from a distance. He analyzed them with an objective eye and kept meticulous notes on how he predicted they would fare after gempukku. A bully whom he described as having limited abilities and prospects found the notes one day. Infuriated, he beat Aoki to within an inch of his life. For his actions, the bully was sent away from the Tamori Shugenja School. Aoki felt satisfied, despite his beating; his analysis of the boy had been completely correct.

Aoki was not a good shugenja by any stretch of the imagination. Since he felt few emotions and because he did not importune the kami with heartfelt devotion, he was unable to achieve any great effects with his spells. Worse, to the extent that he had any inclinations at all, he seemed most interested in the Element of Air, which is not emphasized by the Tamori Shugenja School. His sensei noted that he more of a failure than a success, and after his gempukku Aoki was sent to a small shrine near Shiro Kitsuki. That assignment turned out to be the most important milestone of his life.

As part of his duties tending to the shrine, Aoki came across many Kitsuki who would come to pray from the nearby castle. His curiosity was piqued by the bushi and the strange conversations they would have about investigation and the importance of physical evidence. After a year of covertly listening to conversations and watching the Kitsuki, Aoki decided to learn more about their ideas. He traveled to Shiro Kitsuki every chance that he could get and he spent every free moment in the libraries of Shiro Kitsuki trying to find information on the Kitsuki Method.

When Tamori Shaitung decided to send several shugenja to Shiro Kitsuki to train alongside the Kitsuki, Aoki wrote a letter to his Daimyo. It was quite possibly the first thing about which he felt truly passionate. He wanted to be a part of the experiment in any way that he could. Shaitung accepted and Aoki became one of the first Followers of the Kitsuki Method. He excelled at his studies and he progressed faster than all of the other Tamori. Soon, he began to help the Kitsuki teach his fellow shugenja all about investigation and evidence.

Aoki is currently one of the sensei of the Followers of the Method. While he is still as cool and antisocial as ever, he is always eager to talk about the pros and cons of the Kitsuki Method. He does not care about his students or even his fellow sensei. His only goal is to perfect the art, but he doubts he will ever see the Method achieve true perfection in his lifetime.

TAMORI EMINA, SHAITUNG'S APPRENTICE

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3
Intelligence: 4

Honor: 3.9 Status: 1.3 Glory: 1.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Tamori Shugenja 1

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Friend of the Elements (Earth)

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Small

SKILLS: Courtier 3, Defense 1, Divination 2, Etiquette 1, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 3, Meditation 3, Theology (The Fortunes) 5

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Earth's Touch, Extinguish, Fires of Purity*, Nature's Touch, Speed Growth*

Emina began to serve as the apprentice to Tamori Shaitung at a very young age. The daughter of two samurai, Emina was orphaned when both of her parents fell in battle against the vicious army that rampaged across the land during the War of Spirits. Shaitung took pity on the girl and took her in to her own home. She asked nothing of her and instead let the devastated girl recuperate in peace. To show her gratitude, Emina began to help with chores around the house and keep Shaitung's effects neatly arranged. Shaitung ob-



jected to this immediately — as a samurai, Emina should not be subject to such menial labor — yet Emina continued to do so. Finally, Shaitung grudgingly agreed that the girl could help her organize sensitive materials and documents that were too delicate for servants' hands.

She grew with knowledge of Tamori dealings and complex rituals in her mind, yet she never used them to ill effect. She became close friends with Shaitung and constantly advised her on the right course of action. Shaitung had grown cynical and angry in the wake of her father's betrayal of the Empire. Emina served as her bright counterpart. When Shaitung rejected her own attraction to Isawa Nakamuro, the Phoenix Master of Air, Emina immediately advised her to reconsider. *There is nothing more important in life, she said to her Daimyo, than to be happy.* Shaitung was touched by her eternal optimism but did not listen.

But her words were not wasted. Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love, appeared in front of the young shugenja and blessed Emina with wisdom beyond her years. Emina immediately went to Shaitung and told her what happened. She once again urged Shaitung to think about her decisions regarding Nakamuro. She swayed Shaitung with her words, weighed by the power of Benten, and the Tamori Family Daimyo married Isawa Nakamuro.

Emina is a very sweet and gentle woman. She believes in the good that resides in everyone's heart, and she believes that all samurai are able to respect the kami and the Empire while still staying true to the militaristic aspects of their lives. She is one of a handful of people in Shaitung's confidences, and she is very honored to be so trusted by her Daimyo. Her powers with the kami are not as impressive as some of the others and she would never be a force in combat. However, she continues on with her studies of the kami so that she could properly revere them.

Emina has a great love of Rokugani literature, both ancient and new, and she keeps up with the latest news of playwrights who may announce their latest works to the Empire. Few theatre troupes come to the Dragon lands, but Emina takes every chance she can to attend plays. She often travels with Shaitung to other cities, and there she indulges herself in the latest melodrama or Noh play with barely contained excitement.

TAMORI WOTAN, MADMAN

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 2	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4		Intelligence: 6	Strength: 3	
Honor: 2.1		Status: 3.2		Glory: 6.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Tamori Shugenja 3/Tamori Alchemist

ADVANTAGES: Combat Reflexes, Misugusuri Master

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Madman), Missing Eye

SKILLS: Battle 2, Calligraphy 3, Defense 7, Divination 2, Kenjutsu 5, Medicine (Herbalism, Wound Treatment) 3, Meditation 4, Spellcraft 4, Theology 3, Tea Ceremony 2

SPELLS: Banish, Commune, Counterspell, Importune, Sense, Summon, Armor of the Emperor, Breath of Heaven's Fire*, Curse of Stone, Earthen Blade*, Earth's Touch, Fires From Within*, Fires That Cleanse*, Fist of Osano-Wo*, Fury of Osano-Wo*, Hands of Clay, Path of Inner Peace, Rejuvenating Vapors, Slash of the Lion, Way of Still Waters

Once, Wotan's notoriety was limited to the Dragon lands. Many heard of the unstable shugenja and his crazy exploits, both on and away from the battlefield. He was a hidden asset to the Dragon lands and his magic and misugusuri has defeated many armies. After his explosive debut in the Jade Championships, however, his fame has grown until his name can be heard all over the Empire.

Wotan has always been an enigmatic man. Born to a Togashi monk and a Tamori shugenja, Wotan spent his days meditating on the mountainside with the rest of the Togashi monks. One day, when he was still just a boy, he opened his eyes in the middle of his meditation and made a startling discovery. War, he believed, was the purpose of his existence as a samurai, and war was what he would master. From that point on, he stopped meditating with the rest of the monks and instead began to spend every waking moment with the Mirumoto.

But Wotan refused when his parents offered to send him to the Mirumoto Bushi School. He knew he was blessed by the presence of the kami and he would not insult the Heavens by ignoring the gift. At the Tamori Shugenja School his martial tendencies were nurtured and encouraged, and he learned how to use spells and kiho along with swordsmanship to defeat his enemy.

When he completed his gempukku he joined the Imperial Legions under Toturi Tsudao, the daughter of Toturi I. Unfortunately, his life took a tragic turn in the campaign against the Yobanjin horde. The wily foreigners ambushed his unit and took Wotan captive. The Yobanjin tortured him for several days and in the end took out his right eye. The pain was immense. The Legion rescued him shortly after, but the damage was done. Wotan can still feel the events of that day whenever he lets his mind wander.

When he returned to the Dragon lands he immediately began service with the Dragon army. With his great understanding of the military tradition and his powerful spells, he proved to be a huge asset to the Dragon. He quickly established himself as a very powerful shugenja who would take great risks for the sake of the Clan. Tales began to spread of Wotan, how he alone defended a mountain pass against an entire army for a day. People gossip about how Wotan mutters to himself when no one else is around, and no one dares ask if he is addressing himself or some invisible spirit. Wotan intimidates everyone around him with his stoic attitude and his horrific wound, yet he is friendly and welcoming to anyone who would address him. Few ever get to see that side of him, rejected by his reputation and the aura of death and warfare that seems to constantly surround him.

TAMORI SHAITUNG, TAMORI FAMILY DAIMYO

Air: 3 **Earth:** 6 **Fire:** 6 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 6
Reflexes: 5 **Willpower:** 8 **Agility:** 7 **Strength:** 5

Honor: 3.7 **Status:** 8.7 **Glory:** 6.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Tamori Shugenja 5/Tamori Yamabushi/Spirit Binder 2

ADVANTAGES: Aligned to the Elements (Earth), Blessing of Earth, Strength of the Earth (6), Magic Resistance (4)

DISADVANTAGES: Insensitive

SKILLS: Calligraphy 4, Craft: Misugusuri 3, Deceit (Intimidation) 5, Defense 7, Jiu-jutsu 5, History: Dragon Clan 5, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Medicine (Herbalism, Wound Treatment) 5, Lore: Elements 5, Meditation (Void Recovery) 6, Spellcraft (Spell Research) 5, Theology (Shintao) 6

SPELLS: Armor of Earth, Armor of the Emperor, Biting Steel, Breath of the Fire Dragon, Castle of Water, Fires of Purity, The Fires From Within (First Focus Spell), Force of Will, Immortal Steel, Jade Strike, Katana of Fire, Path to Inner Peace, Regrow the Wound, Rise Earth, Shatter, Slash of the Lion, Stance of the Mountain, Tempest of Air, Tomb of Jade, Wall of Earth, Wind-Borne Speed.

Note: Tamori Shaitung knows all of her spells as Innate Abilities.

Tamori Shaitung has faced many hardships in her life but she finds that it was all worth it in the end. She is happily married to Tamori Nakamuro, the Elemental Master of Air, a union driven more by romantic love than the needs of her Clan. Her Family now prospers instead of languishing under the shadow of treachery and deceit. The Ta-

mori have found their niche and serve the Dragon in their own way, instead of simply attempting to fill the hole the Agasha created upon their departure.

Ever since she was a little girl, Shaitung has known that her life would be filled with hardship. As the Daimyo's daughter, there were many expectations placed upon her. She vowed at a very early age to fulfill all those expectations. It did not help that her father was always distant and never complimented her on her abilities. Nevertheless Shaitung forged onwards with her studies and eventually became one of the greatest shugenja of her time. Shaitung assumed the command of her Family when her father disappeared. Eventually he was discovered as the Dark Oracle of Fire, and Shaitung stopped at nothing to bring him to justice.

Shaitung's exploits have been well recorded in history. Her feud with Isawa Taeruko, Master of Earth, brought forth bitter relations between their two Clans. She defeated the Elemental Council in combat using very desperate tactics. Under her strict supervision, the Tamori Family has grown in leaps and bounds. She began a new crusade to destroy harmful nemuranai, harnessing the powers of Tamori's Furnace in ways that had never been done before.

Shaitung may appear to be antisocial to those who meet her for the first time. She is abrupt and curt, only speaking words she deems necessary. She will not conform to societal niceties and will speak her mind. She is at heart a just and kind woman, and she treats all of her Family as equals. As she has grown older she has grown mellow, and her tongue is not as caustic as it was in her fiery youth. However, people should not take that as a sign that her will or her expectations have weakened.

It is evident that Shaitung will leave quite a legacy to the Tamori Family after her departure. The Tamori hope that her departure will not occur for many decades to come.

TOGASHI ASAI, RECKLESS ADVENTURER

Air: 2 **Earth:** 3 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 2 **Void:** 3
Reflexes: 3 **Intelligence:** 4 **Strength:** 4

Honor: 4.1 **Status:** 0.0 **Glory:** 2.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Togashi Tattooed Man 2

ADVANTAGES: Daredevil, Luck (3)

DISADVANTAGES: Small

SKILLS: Acting 2, Artisan: Sculpting 2, Divination 1, Games: Fortunes and Winds 4, Investigation 3, Jiu-jutsu 5, Medicine 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 2, Theology 2

TATTOOS: Avalanche, Falcon, Tiger



There are those among the ise zumi who believe that their destiny lies within the monastery. They believe that they will find their wisdom among the countless scrolls that have been stored over the years, which they will find enlightenment through the words of philosophers and heroes. There are those who believe that they will find clarity on the battlefield as they sweat and bleed and die for the good of the Clan. Finally, there are those who believe that they will find Enlightenment while traveling the lengths of the Empire.

Togashi Asai is a firm believer in the latter.

Asai was born the daughter of two merchants who ran a small business at Kyuden Tonbo. When the Lion destroyed the Dragonfly Castle, her parents found themselves out of

work and out of money. They found they could not support their entire family of five. They left Asai, the youngest, on the doorsteps of the nearest monastery and moved on to the Crane lands to seek a better life. The monks took her in as their own and raised her in their ways.

Asai left the monastery over five years ago and has since traveled Rokugan as a mendicant. As she bears the tattoos of the Dragon and their mannerisms, the magistrates of the other Clans allow her to travel through unmolested. Asai revels in meeting new people and sharing new experiences among all walks of life.

Recently, Asai has found a new fascination that has proven to be profitable. When she traveled to Ryoko

Owari, one of the dens of crime and nefarious dealings of the Empire, she played a simple dice game called Fortunes and Winds. She found out that she is rather quite good at it, and she has made a small fortune for herself over the course of a year. She has traveled to gambling dens almost exclusively for the past year, associating with degenerates to play her favorite game. Dealing with the seedy underbelly of the Empire does not seem to faze Asai; instead, she seems to enjoy the company almost as much as the game itself.

TOGASHI HYOTARU, MASTER OF THE TESTING GROUNDS

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 4	Strength: 6	
Honor: 2.9		Status: 0.0		Glory: 2.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Togashi Tattooed Man 5

ADVANTAGES: Togashi's Blessing, Way of the Land (Togashi Testing Grounds)

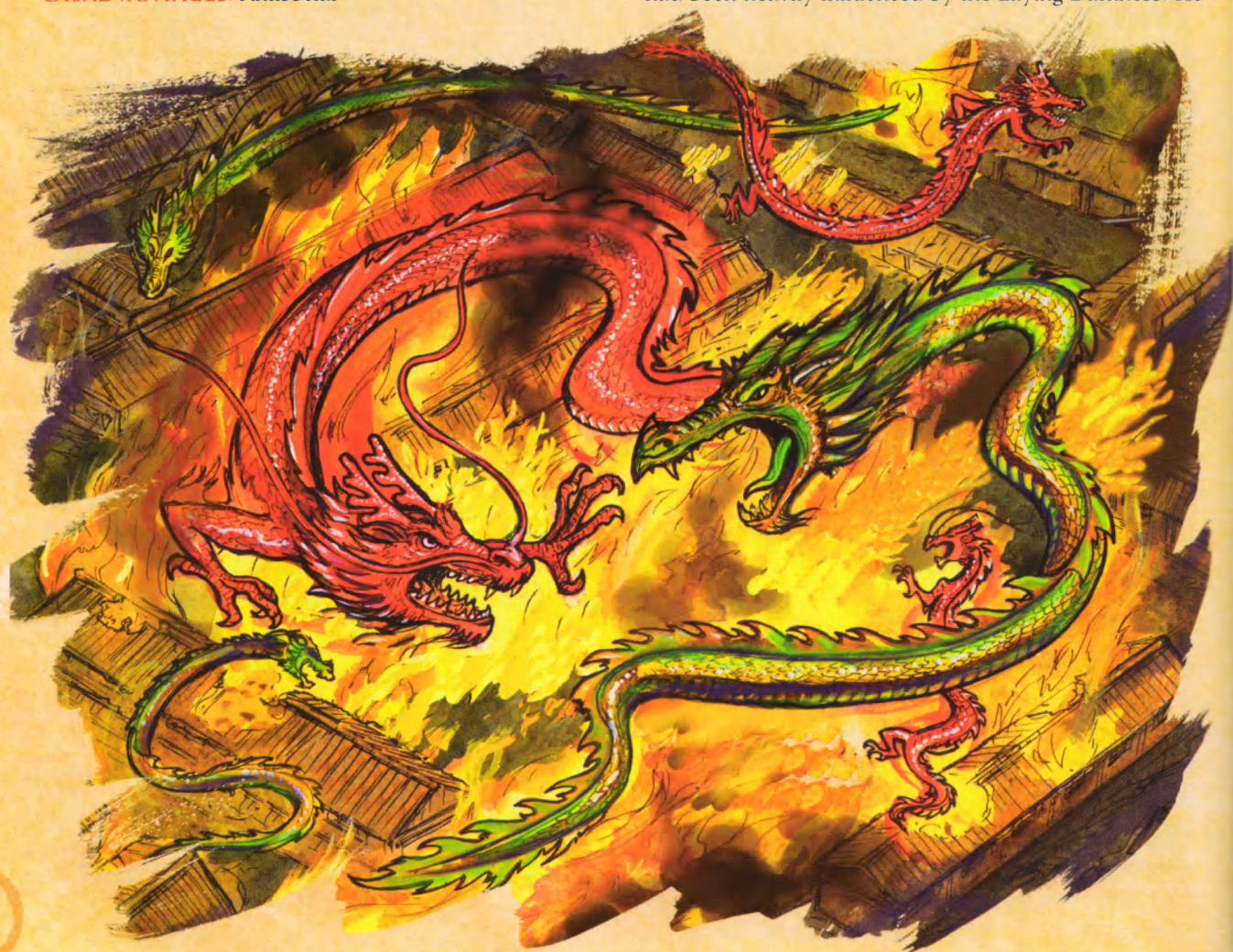
DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial

SKILLS: Animal Handling 2, Artisan: Painting 3, Jiu-jitsu 4, Medicine (Herbalism) 3, Meditation (Fasting, Void Recovery, Zhanji) 7, Theology 1

TATTOOS: Arrowroot, Bamboo, Crane, Panther, Tiger, Wolf

Togashi Hyotaru is now a very old man, yet he refuses to slow down. He is now older than most of the ise zumi that serve Togashi Satsu but he has no intention of taking his rightful place as one of the leaders of the Order. He is content to guide those who enter the Togashi Testing Grounds and will leave the fate of his people in more capable hands.

Togashi Hyotaru was once Hitomi Hyotaru. He was one of the first to swear fealty to the new Champion following the Second Day of Thunder and became one of her most fervent followers. He followed her every order, even those he personally found distasteful. He helped the others destroy the disloyal Togashi and ban them from the Dragon lands. Later on, he found out that the orders he followed had been heavily influenced by the Laying Darkness. He



should have seen that the orders were not moral; he berated himself, and figured out some way to help Hitomi. It was his personal failure to recognize this that the tragedy occurred. When he could no longer keep himself from his self-loathing he entered the Togashi Testing Grounds, a very dangerous and deadly place, with the intention of never coming back.

The Togashi Testing Grounds is the most dangerous area of the Dragon mountains. The weather is treacherous, the terrain is harsh and unyielding, and feral animals stalk its lands for easy prey. Hyotaru believed he would die in the Testing Grounds within the first week. Instead, he began to learn every nook and cranny of the Testing Grounds. He lived and thrived in that deadly wilderness. He mastered the terrain and decided to help those who might need his aid.

It has been several decades since Hyotaru entered the Testing Grounds, and he has never stepped foot outside of its borders. He forages off the land and only speaks when he comes across another Dragon in the area. He is very kind and helpful; instead of giving students food and shelter, he teaches the young ise zumi how to find the food and create the shelter. He feels that the Testing Grounds is his home and he has no intention of ever breaking his vow. He respects the land and knows that it could one day kill him, but because of his intimate knowledge of the area he knows that day will not come soon.

Few people have ever come to visit him personally. A decade ago, a young man came into the Testing Grounds radiating an aura of serene purpose. Hyotaru watched him as he walked through a treacherous mountain path with no hesitation. Hyotaru hailed the man and the pair shared a conversation about life, duty, and happiness. As the young man left, Hyotaru asked him his name. The monk told him that he was Togashi Satsu, his Daimyo, and asked that Hyotaru continue on his duties inside the Testing Grounds. He was very happy to accept the charge.

TOGASHI KANSUKE, STUDENT OF THE TAO

Air: 3	Earth: 5	Fire: 6	Water: 4	Void: 5
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 7		
Honor: 2.1		Status: 4.2		Glory: 5.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Bushi 5/Student of the Tao 2

ADVANTAGES: Leadership, Sage, Strength of Earth (6)

DISADVANTAGES: Insensitive

KATA: Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Breaking Waves, Endless Strike

KIHO: Channel the Fire Dragon, Dance of the Flames, Embrace the Stone, Fire's Fleeting Speed, Way of Flame

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Deceit 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Heavy Weapons 3, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (Shugenja) 2, Meditation 5, Spears 3, Stealth 4, Theology (Shintao) 6

Few would believe that Togashi Kansuke was a Student of the Tao. He is loud, brutish, and highly insensitive of other peoples' needs. He clearly views himself as superior over everyone around him. He constantly flouts his swordsmanship and he is never seen with a copy of the Tao in his possession.

Everyone would be quite shocked to realize that Kansuke is one of the most devout bushi in the Dragon lands.

Togashi Kansuke was born to two Togashi monks who fell in love at the High House of Light. His parents were very caring but did not pressure him in any way toward his current path in life, instead relying on the boy to choose for himself. Kansuke found himself drawn towards warfare and swordplay, and his parents were happy to help him find that path. Kansuke was very grateful toward his parents that they would allow him to pursue his dream. Impressed by their attitudes, he began to study the works of literature that drove their personal world views.

Kansuke's life quickly became very busy. Because his martial tasks occupied so much of his schedule, he rarely had time for anything else in the daytime. At night, he would burn candles for hours reading on the philosophies of the Tao, the Fortunes, and the hidden clockwork that ran the universe. He honed his kenjutsu to a razor-sharp point but refused to ever slack on his more cerebral studies.

Kansuke has found a connection to the universe that few bushi ever find. His sensei quietly pointed him in the direction of the Students of the Tao, men who share the same convictions as he did. He joined the Dragon armies and served in them with distinction. He was badly wounded in rearguard action against the Phoenix, and it took him many years to recuperate back to full health. It was a minor consolation to him that he could continue to study the Tao while away from the front lines. The years of rest have given him a stronger understanding of the Tao but have not helped his social skills.

TOGASHI KATSUMARA, DEVOUT MONK

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Awareness: 4		Intelligence: 5		
Honor: 3.9		Status: 0.0		Glory: 2.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Togashi Tattooed Man 3

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Ebisu's Blessing

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Health

SKILLS: Artisan: Gardening 3, Courtier 3, Etiquette 5, Jiu-jitsu 1, Medicine 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 2, Theology 4

TATTOOS: Bellflower, Cloud, Ocean, The Void

When the Three Orders existed among the Dragon, the Hoshi were the least worldly. Togashi Katsumara is a strong example of that Family's characteristic simplicity. He does not enter battle nor does he travel the land, but he and many others like him help run the Dragon lands.

Katsumara is the head of a small shrine at the foot of the Dragon mountains. Because of its accessible location, many samurai from other lands come to the shrine to pray and pay homage to the kami. Katsumara makes sure that everything within the shrine runs with perfect efficiency and cleanliness. The monks that serve below him know his perfectionism and work hard to please him. They work together as one to make sure that everyone is satisfied.

Katsumara considers himself a scholar of the Tao. He has gathered hundreds of scrolls and texts to his shrine and pores over them with every free moment. He reads the interpretations of philosophers and theologians over the works and incorporates them into his own world view. When he disagrees, he writes a lengthy and precise rebuttal of those points. He keeps most of these rebuttals to himself, but several of his works have been published. They proclaim him to be one of the greatest minds of their time and believe that he may one day decipher all the mysteries of the Tao.

There are hundreds of former Hoshi monks like him that dot the lands. They may not have interesting stories to tell, but they treat each visitor with kindness and respect. Without Katsumara and monks like him, the Dragon Clan and its study of the Tao would never progress.

TOGASHI MAYA, LEADER OF THE TOGASHI

Air: 5	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 5
		Agility: 4	Strength: 6	
Honor: 1.4	Status: 6.9		Glory: 5.2	

SCHOOL/RANK: Togashi Tattooed Man 5

ADVANTAGES: Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Can't Lie

SKILLS: Artisan: Bonsai 2, Athletics 4, Courtier 1, Etiquette 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Instruction 3, Investigation 2, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Medicine 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 5, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 4

TATTOOS: Blaze, Dragon, Hurricane, Mountain, Lion, Ocean

Most samurai relinquish their station and status when they take up vows to the Three Orders. Togashi Maya has never followed convention. She swore to fulfill her obligations to both the monastic world and the samurai world that was her birthright, and she has not disappointed in her balancing act. Many others have noticed her poise and abilities and acknowledge her as one of the wisest of the Order. Togashi Satsu himself appointed her as the head of the ise zumi in recognition of her abilities.

If her younger self ever could have seen her future duties and reputation, she would never have believed it. Born the daughter of a Mirumoto samurai and an Agasha shugenja, Maya was always surrounded by both the martial and the magical worlds. She grew up with a bokken in her hand and she never shied away from fighting with the other bushi children. She knew that there was a world beyond swords and war but she did not care. She was a wild child and she had no intention of reining in her behavior.

When she reached her gempukku, she made a decision that shocked everyone around her. Everyone expected her to continue her bushi education but she adopted the Hitomi Family name and joined the kikage zumi. No one stopped her as they knew the call of the Moon to be irresistible but they all hoped that her excesses would be curbed by a monastic lifestyle. It was not to be. Despite taking the Hitomi name, Maya did not change her rough behavior. She continued to fight with and continued to learn the way of the sword. She simply added other studies along with the martial ones.

Maya found her tattoos intoxicating. The sheer magic of each one was powerful and held her fascination. She knew that she was controlling powers that were beyond her comprehension and she did little to try to understand them. She simply pushed them to their limits, and when she found those limits, pushed even harder. She often passed out for hours or days as she exhausted her mind and body with her tattoos, but she would be back to her usual tricks after she recuperated from the pain. She was ready to accept death if it meant that she could accomplish magnificent things with her tattoos.

Maya has never forgotten that she is at heart a samurai. She is one of the few Togashi who openly carry a daisho at her side. She never expected to become a role model to others, yet there are many who revere her carefree attitude and her powerful tattoos. Maya never expected to become the head of the ise zumi, but she will approach the station with the same reckless abandon as she did her tattoos.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: Dragon Spirit-Binder (Shugenja)

The Dragon practice a unique custom that is unheard of outside of their lands. The Spirit-Binders are shugenja who forge a bond with a particular spirit. Often these Spirit-Binders are a result of complex rituals that occur at the Wrath of the Kami shrine. They connect intimately with the kami in question, allowing them to access the Elements with greater power and focus. The Spirit-Binders are more than normal humans after they have undergone the change. They are part kami, and new Spirit-Binders often become less connected with the world as the changes affect their personalities. Once they gain control over the different sensations and feelings they suddenly face, the shugenja turn back to normal.

REQUIREMENTS

RINGS/TRAITs: Any 4 Rings at 3

SKILLS: Lore: Shugenja 5, Meditation 6, Theology (Shinto) 4, Spellcraft 4

OTHER: You must know at least 4 innate spells. You must be a Dragon Clan shugenja, or taught by an Agasha Spirit-Binder.

Techniques

RANK 1: SOUL'S UNION

The Spirit-Binder forges an intimate connection with particular spirits. When you cast any spell that is not an Innate Ability, your School Rank is considered to be 2 lower. You may gain new Innate Abilities normally, however. When you cast any spell that you have as an Innate Ability, your School Rank is considered to be 1 higher. When you join this School, select one Innate Ability to become a Focus, binding a part of the kami into your own soul. When casting your Focus, you gain a Free Raise *and* you gain a +1k1 bonus to your Spellcasting Roll.



RANK 2: THE KAMI'S EMBRACE

You may choose 1 new Focus. In addition, the Focus you gained in Rank 1 grants you 2 Free Raises and a +2k2 bonus to your Spellcasting Roll, replacing the bonuses gained at Rank 1.

RANK 3: ONE WITH THE KAMI

You may choose 1 new Focus. In addition, the Focus you gained in Rank 1 grants you 3 Free Raises and a +3k3 bonus to your Spellcasting Roll, replacing the bonuses gained at Rank 1. Also, the Focus you gained in Rank 2 grants you 2 Free Raises and a +2k2 bonus to your Spellcasting Roll, replacing the bonuses gained at Rank 2.

New Path: Tamori Follower of the Method (Shugenja)

The Kitsuki Investigators follow a technique called the Kitsuki Method. It is unlike anything else in Rokugan; instead of relying on testimony of ranking samurai, followers of the Kitsuki Method uses physical evidence and other verifiable clues to piece together a story of how a crime (or any other event) took place. Magic, unfortunately, tends to cause havoc among the clues left behind. The Tamori Follower of the Method has learned the ways of the Kitsuki and can use magic to find out if any magical tampering has taken place. This unique combination of magic and Kitsuki intelligence can solve any mystery, regardless of the criminals' efforts.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Tamori Shugenja 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Tamori Shugenja 3

REQUIREMENT: You must have at least 5 Ranks in the Investigation Skill.

Technique: The Mystic Eye

The Kitsuki magistrates require magical aid whenever the intervention of the kami hinders their investigations. The Tamori Followers of the Method are trained in complementing the Kitsuki techniques. You gain 3 Free Raises while casting the Commune spell. Additionally, you may gain a +2k0 bonus to all Investigation Skill Rolls.

New Advantages**Misugusuri Master [Granted]
(5 Points)**

Requirement: You must have the Technique The Kami's Essence (see *Prayers & Treasures*, p. 18).

You have mastered the techniques of the Tamori, and your skill in the creation of elixirs is renowned. You may create a small vial of liquid that contains an Elemental spell of Mastery Level 4 or lower.

**Togashi's Blessing [Granted]
(4 Points)**

The blood of Togashi flows strong through your veins, and your tattoos are more powerful as a result. Your Togashi Tattooed Man School Rank is considered to be 1 higher for the purposes of all Tattoo effects. This advantage does not increase your School Rank; for example, you cannot gain an additional tattoo through purchasing this Advantage. This Advantage does not grant you any benefit if you do not have any Ranks in the Togashi Tattooed Man School. This Advantage does not stack with the benefits of the Tamashii Advantage (see *The Four Winds*, p. 61), as the blessing of Togashi is already granted to all Tamashii.

New Tattoos

The new tattoos listed in this book may be taken by characters who are members of the Togashi Tattooed Man School.

Avalanche

An Avalanche is an unstoppable juggernaut of power and the ise zumi who call upon its strength reflect that strength. You gain a bonus to your Strength equal to your Earth Ring. If this would increase your Water Ring, it increases all benefits of the Water Ring in respect to Kiho, spells, movement, and other effects. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your School Rank + 1.

Crane

A Crane is a symbol of good luck and endurance, and those who bear its mark reflect that resilience in their every day life. Once per session, if you suffer enough Wounds to kill you, you may activate this tattoo as your last act before life leaves you. You heal Wounds until you have 1 Wound left in the Crippled Wound Level. You then ignore all penalties from Wound Levels for a number of rounds equal to your School Rank + 1.

Falcon

A falcon is one of the noblest creatures that serve the samurai caste. It is a symbol of courage, devotion, and service to one's master. You may activate this Tattoo as a Simple Action or as a reaction before you make a Test of Honor.

Misugusuri, and How to Use It

In *Prayers & Treasures*, the Dragon Clan received a New Path called the Tamori Alchemist. With this Path, Tamori shugenja gain a wealth of new spell options that deviate from the normal method of casting. However, since the mechanics of misugusuri are quite different from normal spell casting, the Technique may cause confusion in players seeking to hurl magical fiery vials. These questions and answers should help clarify this unique mechanic.

What spells can you place into a vial?

Misugusuri requires the involvement of the kami. You may only transmute spells that derive from the Elements, as other types of magic are not compatible with the Tamori's studies. Magic from other lands (such as sahir magic or Unicorn secret spells) cannot be distilled into alchemical solutions. Additionally, maho and evil spirits cannot be trapped into a vial.

Because of the nature of misugusuri, you may not create vials from spells that do not effect either the self or another single target. This means spells like *Secrets on the Wind*, *Tremor*, and *Whirlpool* cannot be distilled into misugusuri.

Can you make Raises to increase the spell's effects when you create the vial?

Since you do not make a Spellcasting Roll when you create a vial, you may not Raise to increase the spells' effects.

You may gain a bonus in rolled dice equal to your School Rank + 1 to your next roll of any type. While this tattoo is active, your limit on how many Tests of Honor you may make during the game session increases by 1.

How do the vials take effect?

Vials imbued with spells that have a Range of Self must be ingested for the spell to take effect. If one of these vials is thrown at a target, it has no effect.

Vials that target someone or something other than the caster must be thrown at the target for the spell to activate. Throwing the vial requires a Reflexes/Athletics, Reflexes/Knives or Reflexes/Ninja Ranged Weapons attack roll (your choice), made as a ranged attack. It ignores the target's armor bonus to TN to be Hit. If the vial misses, it has no effect. If someone drinks a vial that contains a target other than the caster, the spell immediately activates, with the drinker as the target.

Can others use my misugusuri?

Yes. Others can use vials that you created to full effect. If another person drinks a vial that contains a spell that normally targets the caster, he gains the benefits of that spell as if he were casting the spell. If he does not have any ranks in any Shugenja Schools, treat him as a caster of School Rank 1.

However, if another person throws one of your vials that target another person other than you, the spell activates as if you cast the spell at that moment, ignoring range restrictions.

How do misugusuri interact with Magic Resistance, the Technique *Blood of My Brothers*, and other such effects?

Effects that increase or decrease the TN of the Spellcasting Roll, grant bonuses or inflict penalties on the Spellcasting Roll, do not influence the spell stored in the vial in any way.

When do I regain my spell slots for misugusuri?

You spend an appropriate spell slot upon creation of the misugusuri; you may not spend a temporary spell slot using a Void Point to circumvent this cost. These spell slots are expended and remain expended until the vials are used. For instance, spell slots do not return via a full night's rest or meditation until the vials are used. After the vial has been used and the spell has been released, you may regain the spell slots in the usual way.



Hurricane

A hurricane is one of the deadliest natural disasters known to Rokugan, and it can arrive at a fishing village and leave nothing behind except chaos. You can call upon that pandemonium to rout your enemies. You may activate this Tattoo by spending a Void Point. A great gust of wind surrounds you, confusing your foes and hindering your enemies. All enemies within 20' suffer a penalty to all attack and damage rolls equal to your 5 x your School Rank. Ranged attacks that target you or an ally within 20' of you suffer a penalty equal to twice your School Rank. These effects are cumulative.

Both effects last for a number of Rounds equal to your School Rank + 2.

Moth

The moth inspires the ise zumi to chase wisdom and knowledge without fear, much as the moth chases the flame without regard for its own safety. When you learn this tattoo, you immediately learn a Kiho for which you meet all the requirements. You also gain a Void Point that can only be used to activate the Kiho attained from this tattoo. This Void Point replenishes itself at the beginning of the next day if it is spent.

Mountain

The Mountain is everlasting and powerful, resisting everything nature and man can throw against it. You gain a bonus to your Earth Ring equal to your School Rank. This bonus also applies to your Stamina and Willpower Traits. The number of Wounds in your Wound Levels increases accordingly. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your School Rank + 1. When the effect ends, if you have taken enough Wounds to kill you, you are instead left with 1 Wound in the Out Wound Level.

Nightingale

The Nightingale is a noble bird that is sacred to the Dragon for bringing Togashi a plum blossom branch at the end of his fast. Those who call upon the power of the tattoo find that they may also count upon the Nightingale for sustenance. You may activate this tattoo once per day to heal all of your Wounds.

However, this miraculous power is not without its consequences. You may not spend Void Points on Enhancements for the rest of the day.

Panther

These jungle predators live on the Islands of Silk and Spice. They stalk their prey through the shadows, invisible until they are ready to strike. You gain a bonus in rolled dice equal to your Air Ring to all Stealth Skill Rolls. You may ignore all normal Honor losses for using Stealth. This effect lasts a number of minutes equal to your School Rank + 1.

Phoenix

The Phoenix brings wisdom to those who view its magical form. When targeted by a hostile spell, you may call upon the power of this tattoo to raise the TN of the spell by 5 x your School Rank. Alternatively, when targeted by a friendly spell, you may call upon the power of this tattoo to give the caster a number of Free Raises equal to your School Rank.

Tiger

The tiger is a predator that stalks the forests and plains of the Empire. Its pounce is enough to kill its prey in mere moments. When you activate this tattoo, your hands turn into claws. You may not hold anything in your claws. But whenever you make an unarmed melee attack with claws, you may gain a bonus to the attack roll in rolled dice equal to your Fire Ring and +1 in kept dice. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your School Rank + 1.

The Void

The Void is everything and nothing at once. The inky black kanji that represents the Void can give the bearer enhanced control over his senses, detecting things that would normally be impossible to see. You may spend a Void Point to activate this tattoo. You can see and hear through all non-magical darkness and obstruction for the next 10 minutes. You may make a Raw Perception Roll against a TN equal to the TN of the spell cast to attempt to clear a magical obstruction from your senses.

Once the effects of the tattoo fade, your senses must adjust to once more to being limited by your own body. You suffer a +10 TN penalty to all Perception and Perception-based rolls for 5 minutes after the effects of the tattoo end.

Wolf

The wolf can track its prey for miles, tirelessly following the trail until it finally catches the target. You may make

a Hunting (Tracking) Skill Roll against a TN of 20 to track a target by scent. This TN should increase or decrease accordingly for age of the scent, weather conditions, and other factors that may change the difficulty. In addition, you gain Free Raises equal to your School Rank on all Perception and Perception-based Skill Rolls that involve smell.

New Dojo

The following are new dojo available to students of Dragon Schools and Paths. They adhere to all the basic rules outlined for dojo as found in *Emerald Empire*.

High House of Light

SCHOOLS: Mirumoto Bushi, Mirumoto Swordmaster, Student of the Tao, Togashi Tattooed Man

PATHS: Nightingale Samurai

BENEFIT: Students of the High House of Light may purchase the Way of the Land (Togashi Lands) Advantage for 1 less point.

Shiro Kitsuki

SCHOOLS: Kitsuki Courtier School, Tamori Shugenja

PATHS: Kitsuki Justicar, Tamori Follower of the Method

BENEFIT: Students of Shiro Kitsuki gain Investigation as a School Skill. If you already possess Investigation among your School Skills, you gain an additional Rank that does not count against the number of School Skill Ranks with which you began play.

Shiro Tamori

SCHOOLS: Dragon Spirit-Binder, Tamori Shugenja School, Tonbo Shugenja School

PATHS: Tamori Alchemist, Tamori Yamabushi

BENEFIT: Students of Shiro Tamori gain Kenjutsu as a School Skill. If you already possess Kenjutsu among your School Skills, you gain an additional Rank that does not count against the number of School Skill Ranks with which you began play.

Suigeki Toshi

SCHOOLS: Dragon Spirit-Binder, Tamori Shugenja School

PATHS: Tamori Yamabushi

BENEFIT: Students of the Suigeki Toshi may purchase the Friend of the Elements (Water) and Blessings of the Elements (Water) Advantages for 1 less point.

Dragon's Heart Dojo

SCHOOLS: Dragon Spirit-Binder, Tamori Shugenja School

PATHS: Tamori Alchemist, Tamori Yamabushi

BENEFIT: Students of the Dragon's Heart Dojo must choose between armorer or weaponsmith as a specialty. The student gains Craft: Armorer or Craft: Weaponsmith as a School Skill, whichever path he chose. If you already possess that chosen skill among your School Skills, you gain an additional Rank that does not count among the number of School Skill Ranks with which you began play.



MASTERS OF MAGIC

THE MANTIS CLAN



It was the time of year when, in the admittedly limited experience of young Yoritomo Mitsuko, the minds of most people her age became completely addled. It was spring, turning rapidly into summer, and the weather in the Islands of Silk & Spice was at its most beautiful. Cynical though she might be, Mitsuko could not deny that this simple fact was true. Why others allowed it to completely cripple them in terms of their drive, their ambition. The City of Lightning was full to the brim of young students in training, much like herself, but none seemed to possess her focus. The courtiers were hopelessly mired in pointless courting rituals and in discussing trivialities such as the new summer fashions, or even how beautiful the islands were at this time of year. Everyone could see the weather! Why did it bear discussion? The bushi students were little better. They spent every free moment on their tiny kobune, drifting in the ocean, leaping from wave crest to wave crest in some misguided search for the next great thrill. Was it not enough that they spent half their time on the seas for their training? Would they not be much better served focusing on their kata? How could they ever hope to gain their sensei's attention if they did not harness all of their energy on what was important? Mitsuko found it perplexing, and a disappointment. It was no wonder that many senior samurai looked down upon students of her age.

None of that mattered now. Today was the day she had waited for since she first entered the dojo. It was the one day that a sensei of Tempest Island came to the City of Lightning and test those who wished to apply to study at that most prestigious temple. No students had been accepted in the past three years, but this year, Yoritomo Mitsuko was going to be accepted.

And it was now her turn.

Mitsuko stilled the roiling in her stomach and bowed deeply before the sensei. He inclined his head ever so slightly in response, more an automated response than any real gesture of respect. She imagined that he must see dozens if not hundreds of applicants each season, and could not imagine the drudgery such a task would entail. "Are you prepared?" the sensei asked flatly, his tone one of boredom.

"Hai, sensei," she answered.

"Do you understand the nature of the exercise?"

"Hai, sensei," she repeated.

"Your only task," he explained regardless, "is to try and land any sort of successful attack against me. Presumably you will utilize those spells you have been taught here at the dojo, of course, but any attack will do. A physical attack even, if you feel so inclined, although I warn you I am well prepared for such things."

"Hai, sensei," she said one final time.

The old man raised one eyebrow. "You are less talkative than most. A good start. You may begin."

Mitsuko nodded and immediately began invoking one of her preferred prayers. A minor bolt of electricity coalesced between her outstretched hands and leapt across the room, but it dissipated well before reaching the sensei. His expression, which had momentarily seemed interested at her silent nature, quickly lapsed back into boredom. This was something he was accustomed to seeing from applicants, it seemed.

Exactly as she had hoped.

Mitsuko did not pause between her spells. She struck out with a water spell, then a second air spell. Both were among

the most basic offensive prayers she and her colleagues had been taught in the dojo here at Toshi no Inazuma. She did not even bother with some of the other spells she had researched in the library on her own, spells that she doubted any of her fellow students were familiar with. No, those would be well known to any member of her class. She hurled a half a dozen spells at the sensei, who deflected each more easily than the last, before she finally released her true self.

Mitsuko deliberately repeated the elaborate gestures from one of her previous spells, a water spell, drawing an actual sneer of disapproval from the sensei in the process. The prayer, however, was altogether different. Mitsuko could sense the powerful kami the sensei commanded to thwart her spell, but they were ill suited for the actual effect that followed. A powerful gust of air pushed through the sensei's defenses and ruffled the front of the sensei's kimono. It did nothing further; it was not a very powerful spell. Fortunately, nothing further was needed.

The sensei's eyes widened ever so slightly. "What was that?" he asked.

"A spell taught in the Moshi temples," she replied. "It is not taught among the basic Yoritomo lessons."

"I was unaware that you had trained on the mainland," the sensei said. "That would have altered the situation considerably."

"I have not trained on the mainland," Mitsuko corrected. "I am not nor have I ever been a student of the Moshi school."

The sensei frowned severely. "How did you gain access to such a spell, then?"

Mitsuko considered it for a moment, then decided that there was nothing to gain from untruths. "My mother was of Moshi blood. When I was a child, after her death, I found a copy of their Family's cipher in her belongings. This winter, my cousin visited, and I had the opportunity to study one of her scrolls. She is a Moshi as well, and I was able to match enough of the symbols to decipher the scroll, although it took me months."

The sensei's expression had grown stormy. "You have just admitted to acts that many could consider criminal," he said sternly. "What possible justification could you have for your actions?"



Mitsuko stood up straight and lifted her chin. "I dreamt of Osano-Wo my first night in the temple, years ago, and he told me that my destiny was to stand with the Storm Riders. Everything I have done since that time, I have done to fulfill that goal. I am but following the will of the Fortunes."

The sensei raised one eyebrow. "Curious. You are either mad, or perhaps truly chosen." He smiled wryly. "Fortunately, if you are mad, you will not survive your first six months at the Tempest Island dojo."

Mitsuko looked up hopefully. "I have been accepted, then?"

"Yes," was his reply. "I will take you on personally. And your first act, will be a letter of contrition to the Moshi Family." He smirked. "I suppose I will need to write them as well. If their cipher can be broken by a child, then it must be changed."

Mitsuko could not suppress a fierce grin.

The Mantis Families: Philosophy and Theology

In some Clans, there are Families who have been shielded in such a manner that they have never truly suffered the wrath of the Elements. Members of such Families typically regard shugenja and their craft academically, with little true appreciation of what those who wield the kami are capable of doing. The Mantis, however, are not so naive. Of the four Families that comprise the Clan, three have strong shugenja traditions, and the fourth has so often worked alongside magistrates and shugenja that they have developed the utmost appreciation for their capabilities.

The Kitsune

The Kitsune are a Mantis Family only by virtue of extremely recent events. They swore their oaths of fealty to the Mantis Clan Champion less than a year ago, and then only because there simply was no other choice. Many among the Family (previously were known as the Fox Clan) had misgivings about yielding their independence, but ultimately they trusted the judgment of their Daimyo, Kitsune Ryukan, and understood that their only likely alternative was the eradication of their home, their lifestyle, and possibly their very lives. They bring their unique magic and philosophy of life to a Clan that is already perhaps more diverse than any other in the entire Empire.

The Kitsune Family's close relationship with the spirits from whom they took their name has colored their perception on a large number of topics over centuries of developing a group identity. Even more so than other samurai Families, the Kitsune reject the concept of deceit as a whole. The constant struggle for survival has forged a bond of closeness among the Kitsune people that has persisted throughout their existence up to and including their incorporation into the Mantis. Because the Kitsune have so rarely interacted with outsiders on a regular basis, and because they are so accustomed to treating one another with absolute forthrightness, they simply lack the capacity for convincing deceit; a Kitsune who lies is easily recognized. That deception in dealing with spirits is an incredibly dangerous practice has only driven home this behavior among the Kitsune Family.

This is not to say that the Kitsune lack a sense of humor, however; it would be impossible for any Family to maintain such close relations with trickster spirits for centuries without developing their own unique sense of amusement. Absent as they are from the arts of the Empire, the Kitsune enjoy telling jokes and amusing anecdotes, and even playing high-spirited pranks on one another, much as their namesake might. Unlike spirits of Sakkaku, however, no member of the Kitsune Family never play harmful tricks on one another; to do would endanger their ability to perform their duties and maintain their survival.

Compassion is a vital component of the character of almost every Kitsune samurai. Having endured such hardship over the years, they are acutely aware of the same condition in others, and struggle to combat it at every opportunity. Curiously, they display a similar degree of compassion for nature, and in the aftermath of the recent upheaval in the forest regions of their home provinces, the Family has devoted significant resources and time to healing the damage inflicted upon the land, going so far as to use magic to heal individual trees.

The theological beliefs of the Kitsune Family are unusual, to say the least. They are closest to Fortunism in their beliefs, but that is not an entirely accurate description of their practices. While the Family as a whole pays lip service to the Fortunes, the Tao, and of course their own ancestors, the true objects of their reverence and devotion are the kitsune spirits with whom they are allied, and the kami themselves. Although not blasphemous by any stretch of the imagination, such practices are still extremely unconventional and looked upon with consider-

able skepticism by virtually every other order of shugenja in the Empire, save their kinsmen among the Moshi and Yoritomo.

The Moshi

The Moshi are the most contemplative and traditional of the Mantis Families. They maintain the closest ties with the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and they maintain the largest number of traditional shrines and temples within their lands. Ironically, it is because of their traditional nature that the Moshi have suffered such philosophical upheaval over the years, and because of their allegiance to the decidedly unconventional Yoritomo that they have endured and emerged stronger than before.

Until the War Against the Darkness era, the Moshi revered Lady Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, above all other entities and spirits. In return, it could be argued, they were her chosen children, and surely received her blessings, given their centuries-long prosperity in a region that can only be described as inhospitable. After the death of Lord Moon, when Lady Sun took her own life in the act of jigai and was replaced by the mortal warrior Hida Yakamo, the Family suffered a terrible crisis of identity. But, helped by the example of the endlessly adaptable Yoritomo Family, the Moshi emerged intact and with a new philosophy. With the recent celestial upheaval that resulted in Yakamo being ousted from his position as Lord Sun, replaced by a truly divine entity now known as the Jade Sun, the Moshi have much more fluidly responded and have demonstrated the proper deference such an entity clearly deserves.

Other than their recently established reverence for the Jade Sun, the Moshi are quite diverse in terms of their theological devotion. Many of the Empire's most prominent theologians are either of Moshi descent, or have trained among them in their numerous temples. The Moshi Daimyo traditionally is welcome at any meetings of the leaders of various sects within the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and while it is uncommon for the Daimyo to attend (due to her considerable responsibilities at any given time), her proxy is often welcomed in her place.

The Tao of Shinsei does not have the same importance to the Moshi that it does to most shugenja Families. They consider it a work of considerable wisdom, and it is required for all students of the Moshi temples to study it at length, but ultimately the Family's primary allegiance is to the Celestial Heavens and the divine entities that dwell

there. In that respect, at least, the Moshi are strict Fortunists. Ancestor worship is far less common among the Family's ranks than in most Families, although of course their lands have a large number of shrines to prominent ancestors and Family branches. To do otherwise would be inappropriate, and the Moshi value both decorum and tradition.

In terms of their life philosophy, members of the Moshi Family are somewhat more conflicted than one might imagine from spending time with them. Up until the era of the Clan War, the Family was highly traditional in almost every sense, save for their matriarchal nature and the emphasis of their religious fervor. Having joined the Mantis, the Moshi are now the loyal vassals of the Yoritomo, the Family that possesses what very well might be the most fluid standards of morality in all of Rokugan save possibly for the Scorpion Clan. For many of the more honorable members of the Family, this dichotomy can cause considerable stress. Fortunately, the line of the Moshi Daimyo is a particularly practical one, and care is taken to ensure that the most rigid and inflexible among their ranks are left to attend to matters in the Moshi provinces, while other, more tractable individuals are assigned to serve aboard the legion of Yoritomo sea vessels. Still, in general, the Moshi are a very honest and honorable people, and this can and has caused problems with the acclimation of their shugenja among the ranks of the Yoritomo fleets.

The Moshi Family considers compassion not only as a tenet of Bushido, but as the responsibility of any true priest of the kami. Was Amaterasu not a kind, benevolent, and generous being? To behave differently is to cast aside all the gifts that the Lady Sun bestowed upon her followers, and to shame her memory. The Moshi were among the first to answer their Champion's call when the Mantis chose to intercede on behalf of the Fox Clan, and many among their number remained within the Kitsune provinces to aid their new kinsmen in the restoration of their lands. The tendency toward this kind of behavior seems at odds with the Moshi's generally distant, some might say aloof, demeanor, but the disparity is not as significant as one might believe. The Moshi demonstrate compassion for others because they believe that it is the proper and appropriate course of action for individuals in their position. It is far less common, for example, for a Moshi priestess to feel genuine empathy for someone she does not know. It is for this reason that, while the Moshi have the gratitude of a great many whom they have helped, they are not generally remem-

bered with the same fondness as their Yoritomo masters, who aid others in an attempt to prove to the whole of the Celestial Order that a man can better his station if he but commits his mind and resources fully to the task.

The Tsuruchi

The Tsuruchi do not maintain a shugenja School of their own. It is exceptionally rare for an individual to be born into their ranks who possesses the ability to speak to the kami. When such a youngster is identified, the Tsuruchi ensure that he will receive the proper training from one of the other Mantis Families.

In terms of their adherence to Bushido, the Tsuruchi are an oddity. Prior to their acceptance into the Mantis Clan, when they were still known as the Wasp Clan, they very publicly cast aside the concept of Bushido in exchange for their own measure of internal worth, and a unique code established by their founder, Tsuruchi. With the coming of a second generation of the Family, however, a generation born into the Mantis Clan as samurai in service to a Great Clan, this disdain for Bushido gradually diminished until many have embraced it as fully as anyone else.

However, while the present-day Tsuruchi may accept and practice the philosophy of Bushido, the disdain that they hold for those who embrace it without thought or reason, and who allow it to restrict and govern their actions completely, has not abated. The average Tsuruchi samurai is very much the master of his own destiny, in his mind, and while Bushido offers him advice on how to conduct himself, ultimately the final judge of any situation is his own counsel. Those who allow Bushido to govern their actions and drive them onto paths they clearly regret are, in the opinion of almost all Tsuruchi, fools who deserve no better than they have received.

In terms of philosophy, the Tsuruchi are not a Family of particularly deep thinkers. They are eminently practical, and prefer the most direct and immediate solution to any problem that arises. This is strangely at odds with their martial philosophy, which is generally one of delaying and harassment, but the Tsuruchi are hardly alone in possessing a disparity between their actions and their warfare tactics. Their approach to everyday life has caused many to label them rude or irreverent, but of course few among them care one way or another how others refer to them,



as long as their masters among the Yoritomo are not displeased with their service.

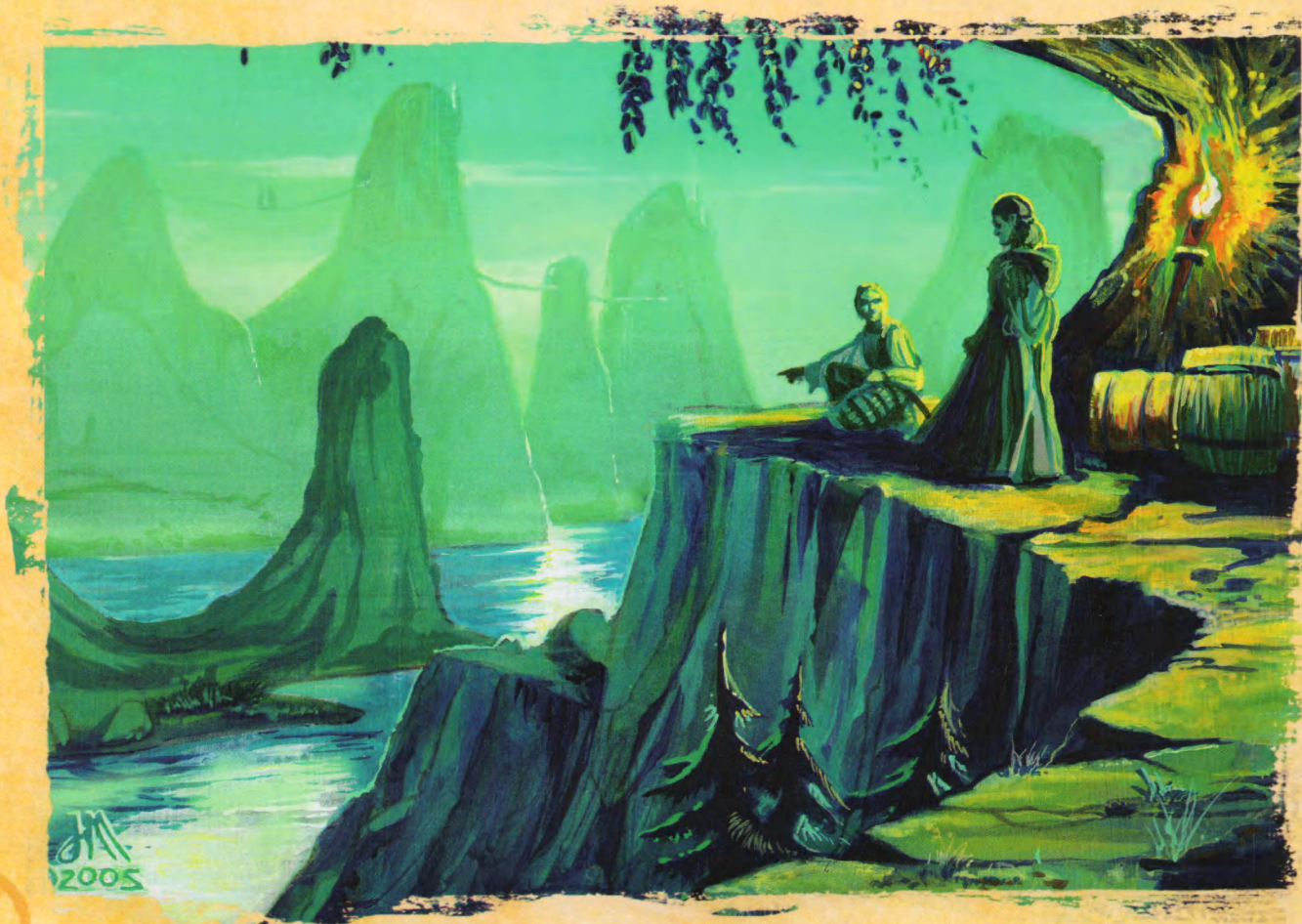
One unique aspect of the group philosophy of the Tsuruchi Family is their tendency to identify strongly with ronin and Minor Clans, despite that the current generation of Tsuruchi was born into samurai status as members of a Great Clan. Regardless of their status, the Tsuruchi are advocates for and allies of the Minor Clan Alliance. They have maintained their ties to the so-called Three Man Alliance of previous generations, with ties to both the Fox Clan, who of course are now their kinsmen the Kitsune Family, and the Sparrow Clan, despite the recently stand-offish nature of the latter. The Family has even contributed a legion of their finest archers to the Minor Clan Alliance, granting the Alliance's military commanders full leave to use the Tsuruchi as they see fit.

Because the Tsuruchi are the sole Mantis Family without their own shugenja tradition, they have a somewhat detached view of religion and theology in general. The priests who serve their lands come from other Families, leaving the Tsuruchi with little involvement even over their

own rituals and festivals. The average Tsuruchi has little time to study the intricacies of the Tao, and being as the Family is only in its third generation, ancestor worship is minimal. By default, the Tsuruchi are largely Fortunists in their devotion. This suits the Family well, as during their extensive travels across the Empire many of them have experienced things that have demonstratively proven the existing of divine intervention in the mortal realm. All Tsuruchi accept that the Heavens and other realms exist, and the vast majority believe quite firmly that those realms exert influence over the mortal realm on a regular basis, even if it is not in a manner that most can perceive.

The Yoritomo

The Yoritomo are, without question, the true lords and the soul of the Mantis Clan. Their lineage is a proud one that can be traced back to the Kami Hida, grandfather of their founder Kaimetsu-uo, and their approach to just about every facet of what is expected of a Great Clan sets the tone for the Mantis as a whole. The Yoritomo lead, and the other Mantis Families will follow, at least to some de-



gree. Intimately familiar with the power of nature and the kami, the Yoritomo have tremendous respect and admiration for the ability of shugenja, but on the whole, their attitude toward religion is just as unconventional compared to the other Great Clans as their attitudes toward just about everything else.

Religion is a strange practice among the Mantis. There is no question that the warriors, priests, and ambassadors who serve the Clan believe in and entreat the favor of the Fortunes. However, these same individuals typically have very little use for traditional rituals, prayers and practices, shugenja being the obvious exception. Instead, the average Mantis samurai believes that valor and personal achievement are sufficient for a man to come to the attention of the Fortunes. This is likely a result of the Clan's descent from Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, and from their long history of interaction with Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea. Both of these entities are wrathful and tempestuous in nature, and both have a history of rewarding those who catch their eye with feats of heroism, bravery, and bravado. Many Mantis simply believe that this attitude extends to other Fortunes as well, although that point is debatable.

While the Mantis Clan does not mandate or even truly foster study of the Tao among its ranks, the Clan still has close ties to the Brotherhood of Shinsei. One of the Brotherhood's largest sects, the Temple of Kaimetsu-uo, is founded on the precepts of the man who founded the Mantis Clan, and the order has many large temples in operation on the Mantis Islands. Some members of the Clan have leave to study among the monks at their leisure, and a small number of highly trained sohei warriors serve aboard important Mantis vessels. While the Temple of Kaimetsu-uo is, like its allies, largely a Fortunist order, the study of the Tao is nevertheless very prevalent among its adherents and often becomes popular with those Mantis who study alongside them, even if only for a short time. It is the Clan's close association with this sect that accounts for the majority of Taoist adherents among their ranks.

Religion and the Life of a Mantis

Major Festivals

Although many Mantis samurai are boisterous people who indulge in revelry on the slimmest excuse, they are not typically prone to organized events, preferring instead to make their own merriment on their own terms. This is not to say that the Mantis do not observe the major festivals of the Empire (see Appendix 3: Festivals of the Empire), but they do so on their own terms. This is particularly true of the Yoritomo, although in varying degrees it can be said about many of the other Families as well. Still, for each Family there are particular festivals that they consider to be of great importance.

The Kitsune are surprisingly mundane in terms of their observance of major festivals and holidays. It is likely that their centuries of hardship have ingrained this behavior into their culture; with such difficult lives, the Kitsune Family embraced any major festival as an opportunity to forget their hardships, but at the same time they lacked the resources to create and observe additional festivals of their own.

As the most traditional and pious of the Mantis Families, the Moshi are noted for celebrating all major religious holidays, but doing so in a subdued and lackluster manner. In particular, the Family's celebration of the Festival of the Moon's Wrath is well known throughout the Empire for being perfunctory in every conceivable way, given that the Moshi have never found the Moon more than a placeholder in the celestial hierarchy.

The Tsuruchi and Yoritomo have very few of their own festivals save for those that are celebrated by the Clan as a whole. Still, both Families welcome the opportunity to abandon decorum to enjoy a moment's indulgence and forget the burdens of their lives. Festivals are rarely a matter of great religious importance for either Family.

Festivals of great importance that are unique to the Mantis Clan include the following:

The Festival of the Sea Dragon – Variable. This holiday is held primarily in coastal regions, as it takes place only when the annual migration of the sea dragons — small

fish that closely resemble dragons — occurs. The exact dates vary each year, although it typically takes place in late spring. These fish are considered extremely lucky, and they are one of the greatest delicacies in the sea. Unfortunately, they have to be taken in extremely small numbers in order to avoid arousing the wrath of Suitengu. Any harvesting of sea dragons must be accompanied by reverent thanks to Suitengu, and in return the few days when this festival is held are when the Fortune of the Sea offers his rare blessings to those who have pleased him.

The Festival of Yoritomo – Fourth Day of the Serpent. This unique festival is celebrated only in the Mantis lands. Indeed, there are very few outside the Clan who are aware of its existence, and only then because they happened to be guests in the Islands of Silk & Spice when the event occurred. The Festival of Yoritomo is the Mantis equivalent to the various festivals of the Kami that are held throughout the Empire during the course of the year. Generally speaking, these festivals are only widely recognized in the lands of the Clan whose Kami is being venerated, but the Mantis in particular are very private about this matter. Perhaps they fear potential retribution from those traditionalists who might be offended at the notion of Yoritomo, an exceptional samurai but unquestionably mortal, receiving treatment as if he were equal to the Kami. Although the Yoritomo Family expects proper deference to their greatest hero, they also grant leave to the other Families to hold celebrations for the founders and heroes of those Families as well, including but not limited to Isawa Moshi, Tsuruchi, and, very recently, the founding members of the Kitsune Family.

The Festival of Yoritomo is accompanied by the traditional events of all major festivals, including both religious observances and revelry. It also involves tournaments and sparring on behalf of Yoritomo samurai, however, as they strive to prove themselves worthy of the legacy of the man whose name they all bear.

Important Superstitions

With regard to superstition, the Mantis are a divided Clan. The Tsuruchi and Moshi Families, although certainly observing a fair number of unique beliefs and traditions, are no more superstitious than any other Families in the Empire. The Yoritomo and Kitsune, on the other hand, are extremely superstitious peoples with large numbers of observances completely unique to their circumstances.

The Kitsune Family, as might be expected, have a tremendous number of superstitions that surround the spirits on which so much of their culture is based. Most revolve around the kitsune spirits and their mundane equivalents, the foxes. Seeing a fox alone is considered lucky, and can be a good omen for anyone about to undertake a new task or duty. Conversely, the act of killing a fox under any circumstances except direct and extreme threat to oneself brings with it the worst karma imaginable. Even finding the remains of a dead fox is bad luck.

A very common superstition among the Kitsune is the adoption of taboos. Taboos are prohibitions that kitsune spirits must observe while in the mortal realm, and particularly when taking human form. The reason kitsune are restricted by these taboos is not fully understood, and remains a topic of some heated debate even after centuries of study and theorizing. However, it is considered good luck for members of the Kitsune Family to take similar taboos, and they believe that they generate good karma by doing so. Many choose to exhibit these behaviors before undertaking some new endeavor, and attempt to improve their chances of success by engaging in this bizarre, penitent tradition.

The Moshi are less superstitious than many believe, as they instead place considerable emphasis on ritual rather than abstract belief. Still, many of their generations-old traditions are now admittedly pointless in the wake of Lady Amaterasu's death, but the Family continues them all the same. In particular, a large majority of the Moshi believe that the day must begin with the recitation of a ritual prayer to Lady Amaterasu. Obviously this accomplishes very little now, but the habit is so ingrained that many persist in it. Some chose instead to honor Lord Sun with their morning prayer, and a considerable percentage honored both. With the recent ascendance of the Jade Sun, roughly half the Family has replaced the object of their morning devotion, but many continue to pray to the Lady Sun each and every morning. Far more limiting than that, however, is the steadfast refusal of the Family to conduct any major ceremony, whether it is a wedding, gempukku, seppuku, funeral, or anything else, unless it can be conducted in full sunlight. No such ceremonies take place at night, and most Moshi architecture makes allowances for a significant amount of sunlight to filter into the interior.

The Tsuruchi are not a superstitious people. They pride themselves on their practicality and pragmatic nature, and deliberately avoid dwelling upon things that are completely outside of their control. Depending upon some personal ritual to complete a task successfully removes accountability and responsibility, in the eyes of most Tsuruchi. To them, there is only the will of the individual, and the strength with which they enact it upon their surroundings.

But this is not to say that the Tsuruchi do not recognize that luck and fortune play a factor in their daily lives; to do otherwise would be quite foolish in their opinion. Most Tsuruchi have at least one item they consider lucky in some way, typically a bow or a secondary weapon. But in the end, they place an even greater emphasis on skill. They do not allow such minor things to influence their ability to perform their duty.

The Yoritomo are easily the most superstitious Family of the Mantis Clan, and quite possibly the most superstitious Family in the entire Empire. Given their close

association with the sea, which can unleash its fury at a moment's notice, this is completely understandable. No sailor leaves port without casting a handful of rice into the sea as an offering to Suitengu. Those who do not are not only doomed never to return, but they are shunned by their shipmates as a source of bad luck. There are dozens of such rituals to placate Suitengu, and very nearly as many to Osano-Wo, the Clan's ancestor and the Fortune of Fire & Thunder. The most prevalent of the latter is the Yoritomo's belief that anything struck by lightning is exceptionally lucky. Many sailors carry trinkets purported to have been struck by lightning, for Osano-Wo never visits his wrath upon the same target twice.

The Tao of Shinsei and Enlightenment

The Mantis place less emphasis on devotional study of the Tao than they do on worship of the Fortunes. The Temple of Kaimetsu-uo gives them their only real connection to the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and so their devotion to the Tao differs from that of the other Great Clans.



One definite oddity in the use of the Tao by the Mantis is that it is frequently used by the Clan's generals and courtiers to gain a better understanding of their enemies. They understand the emphasis that the other Clans place on Shinsei's teachings, ensuring that it is taught to their youngsters as they train to take their place among the samurai. So the Mantis recognize it has an influence on virtually every member of the other Clans. In order to try and gain some insight into how these potential allies and enemies think, study of the Tao is encouraged as an academic pursuit.

Enlightenment is the ultimate goal of all who study the Tao, and who pursue a life within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The Mantis believe, like most, that Enlightenment is a state of being brought on by a fundamental understanding of and harmony with the Celestial Order. Generally speaking, however, the Mantis have far fewer among their ranks who actively seek such a state, as the

Clan as a whole places very little value on it. Ironically, this may have helped some Mantis attain it.

When the prophet Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei, held his challenges and bestowed upon the Empire five sacred books of wisdom, the Mantis aggressively sought them just as much as any other Clan. As was common in that period, those who sought Enlightenment did not find it. There were others, however, that the Brotherhood ultimately decided did indeed find Enlightenment through other means. There was a handful among each Clan, of course, but among the Mantis a few such individuals stood out.

Yoritomo Chimori was a ruthless, dishonorable man in life. He was a pirate and a criminal, even by the lenient standards of the Mantis Clan. Still, he accomplished certain goals that his Champion, Yoritomo Kumiko, needed completed, and thus a blind eye was turned toward his indiscretions so long as they did not imperil the Clan in



any way. When he was exposed by the Emerald Champion, he was quietly reassigned to the Sparrow Clan lands, where he was killed shortly thereafter in a duel with a man whose Family Chimori had greatly wronged — or at least, it was widely believed that he was killed.

In truth he was recovered from the scene, grievously wounded, by an old monk who nursed him back to health and taught him much of the Tao and the place of all men under Heaven. It might have been the monk's teachings, or it might have been the brush with death that changed him, but Chimori was a different man thereafter. Chimori takes no effort in concealing his identity, and the former pirate has become something of a celebrity among many younger Mantis, who wish to hear his tale of redemption *and survival against all odds. His influence has led many to believe that Enlightenment can bring a new lease on life, and allow one to overcome almost any personal deficits, if one is committed to finding his true place in the Celestial Order.*

By far the most unusual individual to allegedly find Enlightenment among the Mantis Clan is a shugenja named Moshi Kekiesu. Allegations of many unpleasant activities surrounded the woman in her youth, from the common accusations of piracy to the more elaborate descriptions, including one who insisted she was a member of the Bloodspeaker cult. For whatever reason, Kekiesu was chosen by her Champion to serve as a representative of the Mantis to the distant Ivory Kingdoms. While there, Kekiesu learned many strange forms of magic known only to the magic-users of that region, known as sahir or jakla. Upon her return to the Empire, Kekiesu demonstrated new abilities never before seen by shugenja, and where once there was wild-eyed reckless abandon, there was instead absolute certainty of purpose and unwavering resolve. Kekiesu has many admirers, all of whom long to study her secret arts, but as of yet she has not taken on any students.

Spirit Creatures and the Spirit Realms

The Mantis Clan has considerable contact with the spirit realms and their denizens, more so than perhaps any other Great Clan. Perhaps it is their perspective as former Minor Clans that allows them some degree of empathy

with the creatures of other realms, as they typically lack the sense of entitlement that most of the Kami-descended samurai of the Great Clans appear to possess.

The Kitsune have the greatest contact with the spirit realms. Their children are raised from birth to honor and respect the spirits, and every aspect of their training as shugenja involves the bond between the Clan and the denizens of Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. They have lesser degrees of contact with Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief, and Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams, as well. They are respectful and reverent to all animal spirits, if for no other reason than their ancestral association with the kitsune, and attempt to maintain proper respect even for the most troublesome denizens of Sakkaku. The Family's contact with the denizens of Yume-do comes from the proximity of their holdings to the Kitsune Mori, where the boundaries between the realms are generally thinner. Because of this, it is not uncommon for members of the Family to experience vivid dreams, which they generally attribute to the benevolent presence of dream creatures such as the baku.

The Moshi have less contact with the spirit realms than the Kitsune or the Yoritomo, but they are not without spirit interaction. Due to their unique history of devotion, the Moshi have had contact with ryu and fushicho, the messengers of Tengoku. Because of their spiritual nature and their devotion to tradition, the Moshi have also had some degree of success in communion with their ancestors as well, although the Kitsune would hardly qualify their interaction as anything significant or meaningful.

The Tsuruchi have little contact with any of the realms in their own lands, but abroad they have had several well-documented encounters with spirit creatures. The Family's duty as magistrates and bounty hunters has most frequently brought them into contact with the more malevolent spirits of Rokugan's cosmology, such as the slaughter spirits of Toshigoku, or the sinister spirits that occasionally escape the bonds of Jigoku.

The seas of Rokugan are vast and primal, and the Yoritomo Family has sailed from one end of them to the next and seen many horrible and wonderful things in the process. Their recent association with the orochi, powerful sea serpents native to Sakkaku, is only the most recent of their associations with the various realms. Many other creatures of the sea have an origin in the spirit realms, and unfortunately the naked ambition of many Yoritomo samurai has resulted in more than one becoming a victim of Gaki-do, the Realm of the Hungry Dead.

Temples of the Mantis Lands

Amaterasu Seido

The oldest and most revered of all Moshi Family temples, this ancient temple to Lady Sun predates even the Imperial edict that established the existence of the Centipede Clan. Although its principle purpose is religious — namely the remembrance of Lady Amaterasu and the many blessings she bestowed upon the Empire — it is also a center of learning and education. Indeed, its resources are such that the Yoritomo requested permission to add their own adjunct sensei to the facility in order to make use of them while training their samurai on the mainland. That the Yoritomo would be so formal as to request permission for such a thing when they could easily have demanded it is a testament to the value that all Families of the Mantis place upon this sacred site.

The recent ascension of the Jade Sun has been a matter of some debate among the Moshi. Most have accepted this development with a quiet understanding, and have properly re-devoted themselves to the new celestial hierarchy. A small number of vocal detractors, however, believe that this even further diminishes the memory of Lady Amaterasu, and insist that their devotion should be only to her memory. To reward a conqueror, they believe, only encourages further strife in the heavens. It should be noted that many of these detractors are non-shugenja members of the Family, and as such have a limited and entirely academic understanding of the workings of the universe as a whole.

More information on Amaterasu Seido can be found in *The Emerald Empire*.

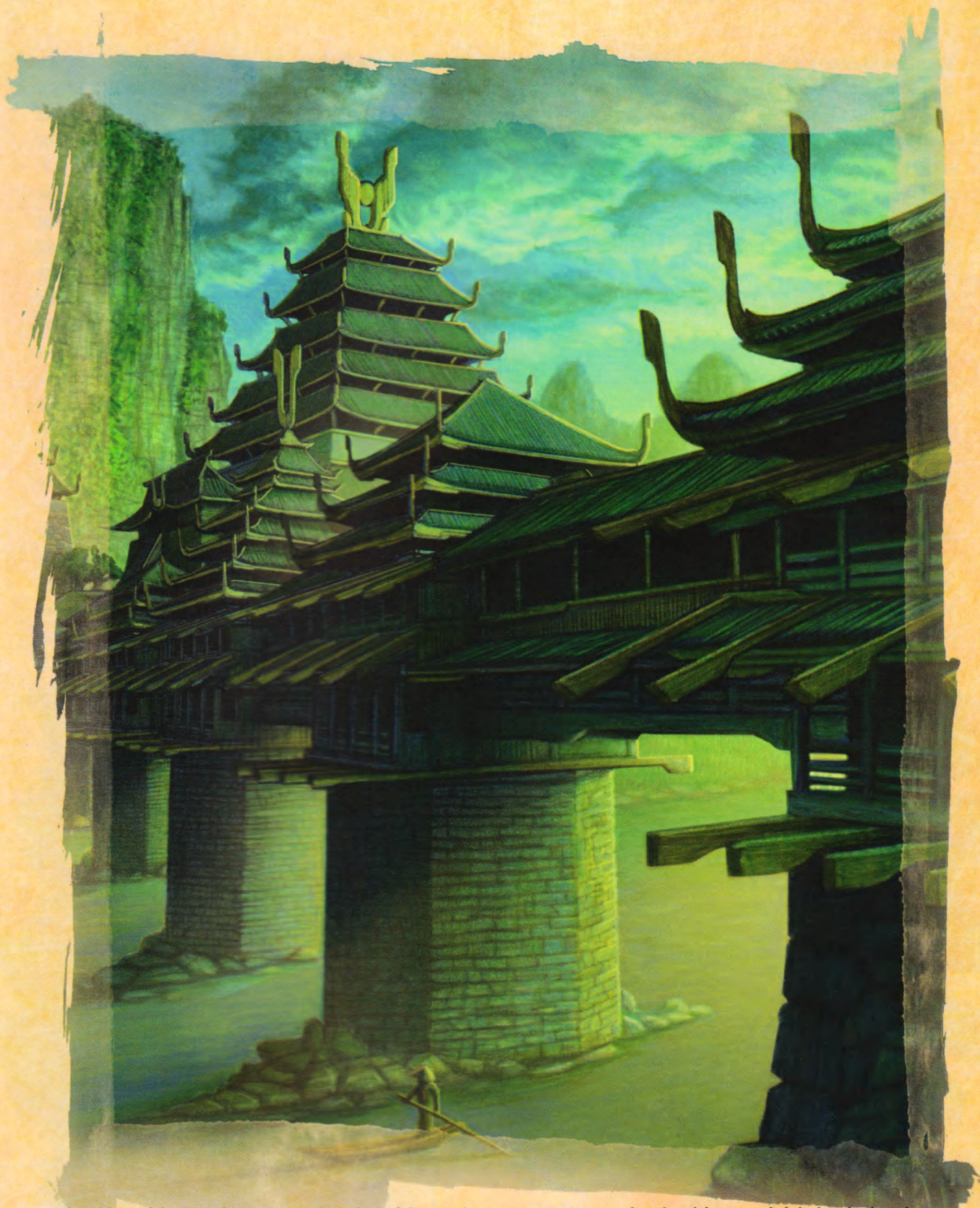
Isora's Alliance Temple

This unconventionally named temple was recently rebuilt and renamed, having been destroyed in the fighting at Toshi Ranbo following the Unicorn Clan Khan's attempt to seize the throne in 1169. The temple was originally one of many devoted to the Brotherhood sect known as the Temple of Ten Thousand Fortunes, although Isora, Fortune of the Seashore, was among those most revered.

The temple was constructed long before Toshi Ranbo became the Imperial City by a Daidoji who had served aboard one of the very few Crane naval ships that patrolled the coastline. He had learned to love the sea and the shore, and upon his retirement, devoted his considerable wealth to the construction of a temple to Isora and Suitengu in Toshi Ranbo, which was under Crane control at the time. While the temple suffered damage in the constant battles between the Crane and Lion for control of the city, it was never destroyed, and was always repaired by the resident monks. It was not until the devastation wrought by Isawa Sezaru that the temple suffered damage significant enough to be considered destroyed, and even then portions of it remained intact.

After the attack and the subsequent conflicts ended, members of the Brotherhood within the city discussed the possibility of not rebuilding the temple, given its history of repeated destruction. An emissary of the Moshi Family interceded, however, and offered to supply the necessary funds, materials, and labor, if only the Brotherhood would offer their blessing and continue to administer it. The Brotherhood agreed, if the Moshi would share in the administration. Many questioned the arrangement, wondering if the Moshi were perhaps secretly ashamed of the Mantis Clan's support of the Khan during his treasonous assault, but the Family Daimyo simply said that she wished to help restore something of beauty in the battered and broken city.

Since its reconstruction, the temple, now called Isora's Alliance Temple, has become a center of cooperation and learning between the Mantis Clan, primarily the Moshi, and several of the larger sects within the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The two groups have had previous contact, of course, for no Family's lands are without Brotherhood temples, but the position of this particular temple in the Imperial City has afforded an unprecedented amount of contact between the leaders of both groups. The result has been quite beneficial for both, as it has granted the Brotherhood more access and influence among a Clan that normally is somewhat difficult to reach, and has brought the Brotherhood's access to learning and philosophy to the Moshi, who value all manner of scholarly pursuits. Virtually any Moshi samurai who visits the Imperial City is encouraged to visit the temple, and many Tsuruchi do as well, although few Yoritomo seem interested in the studies there.



The abbot of the temple is a senior member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei named Tatsu. Tatsu is a simple man of indeterminate age, although the most common estimates place him somewhere around the age of 50 years. No one

is certain exactly what life Tatsu left behind when he entered the monastic tradition, but his devotion to Isora, his obvious familiarity with the water (the temple borders upon the river that runs through the city's center), and

the small shrine that he carefully maintains to Harukiko, the slain Fortune of Fishermen, seem to indicate that he was perhaps a fisherman living on the coast. None are so indelicate as to ask, of course, and even if Tatsu was once a peasant, his station is now that of a monk, deserving of all due respect from samurai, peasant, and other monks alike.

Kyuden Kitsune

The ancestral home of the Kitsune Family, formerly the Fox Clan, is not an impressive structure by any stretch of the imagination. Were it not for the fact that it is considerably larger than the other, buildings in the area, one might easily overlook it when seeking out the seat of the Family's power. Despite its humble appearance, however, there have been relatively few periods when there was not at least one visitor from a Great Clan, and frequently multiple Minor Clans in attendance at the small court at Kyuden Kitsune. For much of history the claim of "oldest Minor Clan" was contested between the Mantis and Fox, and given their nature, the Fox were generally regarded

more favorably than the Mantis. Adding to this was the fact that for much of history the Fox were the only Minor Clan permitted to maintain a permanent presence in the Imperial Court, and it is easy to see why the Great Clans would have showered them with favor.

Everything that happens within the Kitsune Family has its origin at Kyuden Kitsune. The handful of villages and temples the Family maintain all submit their taxes and reports to the palace, and any decisions made regarding the allocation of forces or resources issues from the palace as well. The sudden influx of resources following the Family's recent oath of fealty to the Mantis Clan has only increased this importance, as integration with their newfound kinsmen has also revolved around the court at Kyuden Kitsune. The addition of a small annex devoted to housing a branch of the Yoritomo Courtier School has significantly increased the importance of the diplomatic endeavors at the palace as well.

Kyuden Kitsune is more of a social hub for the Mantis than a mystical one, but it is nevertheless the largest and most influential center of learning for an entire Family of



the Clan, and one devoted to shugenja pursuits. Even the bushi, scouts, and courtiers who train there are devoted to advancing the status of their Family's shugenja, and none more so than the Family's Daimyo, Kitsune Ryukan. A bushi himself, Ryukan has always regretted his inability to speak to the kami, and holds those how possess such a gift in extraordinarily high regard. Something of an ascetic himself, Ryukan has also made Kyuden Kitsune open to all sects of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and it is rare that some of their orders cannot be found represented at the court and temples there.

Kitsune Mori Mura

In a Clan of non-traditionalists, the Kitsune who commune with the spirits at Kitsune Mori Mura invoke bewilderment even among their fellow Mantis, for surely there is no other "temple" quite like it anywhere in the Empire, and perhaps the world. The village is constructed within the boundaries of the Kitsune Mori, known all across Rokugan as one of the most spiritually active forests in existence. Most consider this an excellent reason to avoid the forest, but to the Kitsune, it is exactly this quality that makes it sacred. In the days that the Family first moved to the region, it is no secret that they very nearly did not survive. It is also no secret that they attribute their survival to the intervention of the compassionate kitsune spirits that dwelled within the forest, spirit creatures for whom the forest and later the Family were named. Somewhere within the forest, there exists a static portal to Chikushudo. A handful of the highest-ranking Kitsune know of its location, but no member of their Family would ever betray it to an outsider, or even to one of the other Mantis Families; death would be preferable to such a betrayal.

Kitsune Mori Mura is, in its entirety, a temple devoted to the spirits that saved the Family's life so many years ago. It is not a form of worship as such, for the worship of animal spirits is not part of Rokugani religion as such, but more a form of honoring their ancient allies and their ways. The village exists completely in harmony with nature, with many of the buildings formed from the trunks of still living trees, shaped gradually with powerful earth magic that only the Kitsune understand. Those few visitors whom the Kitsune bring to this village are at once mystified by the oddity of it all and awestruck at its unearthly beauty.

Despite the village's non-conventional devotion, there are many traditional temples and shrines found within it as well. Largest among these is a shrine to Inari, the Fortune of Rice. The Kitsune revere Inari above all other Fortunes. Other shrines exist to other Fortunes, as well as to several prominent ancestor spirits. Chief among these is a shrine to the spirit of Kitsune Ryosei, the previous Daimyo, who guided the Clan through the Clan War and the years following it.

In the past year, Kitsune Mori Mura came under siege from an unknown foe, one that threatened the very existence of the entire Family. Unknown assailants from within the forest began attacking the Kitsune holdings there, at first intermittently but eventually with such frequency and ferocity that the entire village was abandoned and its populace withdrew outside the forest's border. At first the Kitsune believed that they had in some way angered the spirits of the forest, but it soon became apparent that their mysterious opponents were not the spirits they had revered for so long. It soon became apparent that the assailants were after a young woman named Kitsune Narako. Although only a few years past her gempukku, it had been discovered that the girl possessed the exceptionally rare gift of prophecy. Apparently some sinister force had become aware of this and sought to claim the girl for its own. In desperation, Kitsune Ryukan entreated the Mantis for aid. The Mantis responded, and the end result of the negotiations was the absorption of the Kitsune Family, known at that time as the Fox Clan, into the Mantis as its fourth great Family. With the Mantis Clan's assistance, the Kitsune drove their enigmatic enemies from the forest and reclaimed Kitsune Mori Mura, albeit this time with significantly increased wards to protect it from those who might do it harm.

The central authority of Kitsune Mori Mura, as well as its most ardent advocate and defender, is a shugenja named Kitsune Mizuru. Mizuru is a senior Family sensei and has served with great distinction for nearly three decades. Unbeknownst to anyone else in the Family, however, he is actually a kitsune spirit that took human form after the infant boy who would have grown up to become Kitsune Mizuru perished. None within the village, and indeed no one within the Mantis Clan as a whole, knows his secret, and he has no intention of revealing it. His human life will be at an end relatively soon, and it is his plan to serve until death, as a true human would. In the meantime, he is both a caring and wise master for those who

dwell within the village, and the peasants who live there look upon him as a spiritual leader more so than a mere samurai lord. Mizuru holds regular rituals at the different shrines throughout the village, and often allows peasants to take part in them, a practice that would be frowned upon or even provoke outright outrage in other parts of the Empire.

Kyuden Kumiko

One of the most recent and extensive Mantis constructions, Kyuden Kumiko is a sizable palace that dominates the simultaneously constructed Broken Wave City on Kaigen's Island just off the Phoenix coastline. The entire island was converted to a Mantis stronghold with a very specific intent, namely to become one of the Clan's seats of power in (or near, at least) the mainland. As such, it is the headquarters for the Third Storm, one of the three great fleets that the Clan maintains in lieu of a traditional army, one of their most affluent and high-traffic centers of diplomatic relations, and home to a number of shrines and temples. All of the Clan's shugenja traditions have facilities here, even the Kitsune, who joined the Family after the palace was constructed. Although the island is not a center of religion or philosophy, even among the Mantis, it is a prominent educational site for shugenja of all the Clan's Families.

More information on Kyuden Kumiko can be found in *The Emerald Empire* and *Masters of Court*.

Tempest Island

The City of Lightning is the traditional seat of power for the shugenja tradition within the Yoritomo bloodline, and has been for generations. When the Moshi first assisted the Yoritomo in establishing their School, it was in the City of Lightning that they did so. For all that Toshi no Inazuma is the theoretical center of the Yoritomo Shugenja School's power and influence, however, most recognize that it is in fact Tempest Island where the greatest Yoritomo Family shugenja study their craft.

Until it was established as a major temple, Tempest Island was completely devoid of settlement of any kind. It is a small island situated in the part of the Mantis Islands that has the worst weather; it is besieged by violent thunderstorms almost year-round. Attempts to establish small holdings on the island had been attempted over the years, but when the largest and most elaborate was completely

reduced to driftwood by a particularly violent storm a century ago, all attempts ceased, at least until the chaotic days of the Clan War.

During the Clan War, a young shugenja named Yoritomo Taiken claimed that he was going to meditate on the shores of Tempest Island throughout the night. Many scoffed at such an idea, and his Family begged him not to go through with the plan; at that time of year, the thunderstorms were at their most violent and were occurring on a nightly basis. Taiken would not hear of it, however. He claimed to have received a vision during meditation, and that he must do as commanded by the Fortunes. He was escorted to the island's shore by a small kobune, which contained his tearful young bride. That night, the storms were unlike anything anyone had ever seen. Aged Mantis samurai present at the City of Lightning claimed that they had never seen such a display, and that surely the Fortunes had been enraged by some mortal folly. Everyone assumed that Taiken was dead, and indeed possibly that his foolishness had precipitated the storm's severity.

The following morning, however, the kobune that returned to the island at Taiken's bride's insistence discovered the young shugenja sitting unperturbed on the beach, meditating just as he had intended. What's more, the sand all around him was fused to glass by repeated lightning strikes. The sand where Taiken sat was unaffected, however, and the shugenja who was present claimed that such a thing simply could not be; the entire area should have been affected. Taiken replied that the Fortunes had spared him their wrath, because he was enacting their will. He further declared his intention to build a temple on the island. Despite its reputation, no one could deny that the young man had proven his point, and he was permitted to requisition materials to enact his plan.

In the decades since that time, Tempest Island has become known as the most exclusive, prestigious temple in the Mantis Islands. The sensei hand-pick their students from a pool of applicants that is more than ten times the number of students who are ultimately chosen. The sensei themselves are without question the most powerful shugenja the Family possesses, and they, along with perhaps a dozen of their hand-selected students, are known as the Storm Riders. Until recently, Taiken's son Yoritomo Kaigen was the temple's grand master, having taken his father's place upon his retirement years previously. Kaigen perished in the War of Fire and Thunder, however, and his initial replacement was a long-standing senior

sensei already serving at the temple. This individual retired six months after his appointment, however, and his replacement, Moshi Sayoko, is both the first woman to hold the position of master sensei in any Yoritomo temple and as the temple's first sensei of Moshi descent. While Sayoko's appointment has been somewhat controversial, the year since her ascension has quieted all who initially protested; she is, without a doubt, capable of magic that shakes the oceans themselves.

One of Sayoko's first actions as the new Grand Master of Tempest Island was a thorough review of one sect of shugenja training there, a group known as the Orochi Riders. Confused by many with the Storm Riders, the Orochi Riders were a group of both shugenja and bushi who were trained to work in tandem with orochi, the massive sea serpents freed from Sakkaku by Mantis magic in exchange for service to the Clan. This gave the Mantis incredibly powerful weapons that they deployed with tremendous effect against a number of targets, mainly a few pirate groups that had infringed upon Mantis sovereignty over the seas. She was dismayed to discover that the first among the orochi to join the Mantis, an entity called Tsurayuki, was almost at the end of its term of servitude. She was even more dismayed to discover that,

upon fulfilling its debt, Tsurayuki turned upon the Mantis vessels it had accompanied for many months, destroying six and killing over a hundred men in the process. Sayoko immediately ordered the decommissioning of the Orochi Riders, and allowed the orochi to have freedom to roam the seas unless called upon. Since that time, she and those she has entrusted with this secret have searched for a means to prevent the same manner of betrayal from happening in the future. Some believe that Tsurayuki was an aberration, and that the others will not necessarily react in the same manner, but Sayoko does not wish to take that chance.

Temple of the First Wasp

One of the more recent major temples in the Mantis Clan holdings, the Temple of the First Wasp is also the Mantis' largest temple devoted exclusively to ancestor worship. While ancestor worship is common among all the Families of the Mantis, it is most prevalent among the Tsuruchi. Most who are not familiar with this temple, which is located within the recently constructed village of Houritsu Mura, assume incorrectly that it is in fact a shrine to the spirit of Tsuruchi, the man who was responsible for the creation of the Wasp Clan. This is incorrect (and



while many do not know it, including most of the Tsuruchi themselves, Tsuruchi still lives as the monk Tanari, a high-ranking member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei; the shrine is actually devoted to a magistrate who lived centuries ago, named Doji Ietomi.

Doji Ietomi was a magistrate who had a reputation for tenaciousness. He was not a particularly prestigious man within the Crane Clan, and his appointment was not a prominent one. Still, the province in which he worked had a spectacularly low rate of criminal activity, due largely to Ietomi's efforts; he was not given great recognition during his lifetime, however, and it is quietly believed by many who have studied his life that he was in fact saddled with an incompetent superior. The circumstances surrounding Ietomi's life and death are somewhat sparse, and appear in virtually no historical records. But somehow the Tsuruchi Family came into the possession of Ietomi's private journals, and as such they know the truth: Ietomi was ruined because he would not abandon the hunt for a murderer who happened to have Otomo blood in his veins. Ietomi's station, name, and holdings were all stripped from him, but in the end he caught the murderer and executed him as the law demanded of such individuals. He then disap-

peared into the underbelly of Rokugan, never to be seen or heard from again. If he wrote further journals detailing his life as a ronin, the Tsuruchi do not possess them.

Obviously, this tale is not one that the Crane or the Imperials are particularly proud of, or would want to be discussed. Fortunately, the two have been so ruthlessly effective in expunging the event from all historical records that there are virtually none anywhere in the Empire who know the true story. Thus, those few visitors who inquire as to the nature of the Temple of the First Wasp, when told that it is devoted to a Crane magistrate, simply attribute the matter to the eccentricity of the Tsuruchi Family and leave it at that. This is as the Tsuruchi wish it, and they pride themselves on flaunting their forbidden knowledge without doing drawing attention to themselves.

The Temple of the First Wasp is characteristic of the unorthodox approach to religion embraced by the Tsuruchi Family. They do revere their own ancestors, or at least those few who have a clear ancestral line with which they are familiar (the youngest Tsuruchi currently serving the Clan are the grandchildren of the ronin who joined Tsuruchi when he formed the Wasp Clan). Many, however, prefer to find historical figures with whom they feel empa-



thy, and entreat these ancestral spirits to offer their blessings to the magistrates and bounty hunters who scour the Empire for those who have escaped justice. Obviously, the most prominent recipients of the Tsuruchi's admiration are among the Doji and Kitsuki, both Families with strong magistrate traditions. But there are many among the Shinjo as well, and no small number of Crab, whom the Tsuruchi admire for their tenacity and their practicality.

The head master of the Temple of the First Wasp is an ancient monk named Youma. Some have inquired if Youma is the same man of that name who served the Wasp Clan during the Clan War as one of the rare shugenja affiliated with the Clan at that time. The monk's response, rather expectedly, is enigmatic in that regard; he claims that he is no longer the person he was before he joined the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and that he can no longer speak of those times. Thoughts on whether this means he is in fact the same individual are divided right down the middle. What is known, however, is that he is an extremely knowledgeable scholar of history, theology, and philosophy, and will gladly speak at length with anyone who seeks an audience with him. Many Tsuruchi magistrates seek him out for guidance when faced with a difficult task, either in the form of historical comparisons or philosophical discussions that can lead to new viewpoints on existing facts.

Temple of Kaze-no-Kami

Until a short time ago, the Temple of Kaze-no-Kami was not a temple of any significance, either to the Mantis Clan, the Brotherhood of Shinsei, or the Empire as a whole. Over the course of just a few years, however, events have transpired to vastly increase its significance and prestige, and now many throughout Rokugan know it. The temple was constructed sometime after the end of the conflict known as the War Against the Darkness, and ordering its construction was one of the first acts of the new Tsuruchi Daimyo, Tsuruchi Ichiro. Its construction was looked upon by many with curiosity, as the Tsuruchi were not a particularly pious Family, and because it was being built within the Moshi provinces rather than the lands that had once belonged to the Wasp Clan. Ultimately, however, it was decided that Ichiro was a peculiar man, and few cared enough about the affairs of the Tsuruchi to inquire further. As might be expected, there was more to the story than most knew.

While the general perception of the Tsuruchi as less than pious is not incorrect, Kaze-no-Kami is among those Fortunes they do generally hold sacred. As a Family that focuses predominantly on archery, it makes sense for them to pay homage to the Fortune of the Wind, who permits their arrows to fly true without interference. However, the construction of the temple's true purpose was altogether different: it was constructed in order to provide a new home for Tsuruchi, the Family's founder, who had secretly retired as a result of terrible injuries suffered during the war and whom most believed dead. Taking the new name Tanari, Tsuruchi quietly retired to a life of obscurity and the rest that he had so rightfully earned. Since that time, however, several events have transpired that have elevated the profile of the small temple to an almost Empire-wide level.

First, the entity Kaze-no-Kami perished during the assault on Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens, by Fu Leng. Many Fortunes fell to the Dark Kami's blades, among them the Fortune of the Winds. The deaths of several Fortunes threw the priests and monks of Rokugan into unknown territory, as they were unsure of how it impacted their ability to conduct their rituals and supplications. Fortunately, while the Fortunes themselves may have perished, the kami that served them remained in the mortal realm and answered the prayers of the shugenja who entreated them, leaving relatively little disruption in the daily lives of most Rokugani. Still, Kaze-no-Kami's death cast the small sect of the Brotherhood of Shinsei that served it, the Order of Wind, into the spotlight, and a few pilgrims began to travel to the temple out of curiosity. This lasted only a few years before it finally subsided, but by that time the temple was on many maps and known to a number of different orders.

A few years ago, Tanari was joined by a second monk to tend to the temple, a newcomer to the Brotherhood named Shumai. Shumai, who had been known as Tsuruchi Ichiro until his retirement, took over many of the day-to-day duties of the temple, granting his mentor more time to pursue other activities. This unprecedented amount of free time led to Tanari's involvement with the greater Brotherhood, and upon the retirement of Shoan, the order's head, Tanari was chosen by his peer to replace her as the head of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Such a high profile, prestigious appointment has certainly drawn attention to the temple, the only temple where Tanari has ever served, and as such the number of pilgrims and applicants to serve there has increased exponentially. Shumai now has

a dozen monks that work in the temple beneath him, less than a fraction of the actual applicants who would serve in the temple if they were permitted to do so, and only a few of which are former Tsuruchi samurai.

Toshi no Inazuma

The City of Lightning is among the most spectacular sights in the Empire. It takes its name from the violent thunderstorms that plague the area around it almost year-round. Fortunately, for most of the year the storms are only on the horizon, where truly astonishing displays of lighting can be observed from a safe distance. During the hottest of the summer months, however, the storms pass directly over the city, and lightning strikes are frequent. The Yoritomo long ago learned to use tall metal poles to absorb the Fortunes' wrath so that constant fires and destruction could be avoided. The Mantis in attendance at the City of Lightning enjoy having guests during the summer months, particularly those who are frequently unsettled by the sheer ferocity of the storms that most Mantis rarely even notice.

The City of Lightning was where the branch of Kaimetsu-uo's family that bore a talent for speaking to the kami first established their small temple. Although it would be centuries before a formal School was created, the temple at Toshi no Inazumi has grown significantly over the course of the centuries, and those rare few other children born among the Yoritomo with the gift of the shugenja were brought there for training. It is said that Kaimetsu-uo's youngest daughter was a shugenja of extraordinary power and skill, capable of summoning and dismissing great hurricanes and tsunami in the blink of an eye. While this is almost certainly hyperbole, it is absolutely true that the shugenja bloodlines within the Yoritomo Family have a tendency to produce extremely powerful individuals with a bond with the sea that cannot be rivaled by even the most powerful water shugenja of other Clans.

The temple at Toshi no Inazuma is not devoted to any one particular aspect of Rokugan's religion; there are shrines to many prominent heroes of the Yoritomo line as well as several Fortunes. The most prominent ancestral shrines are of course devoted to Yoritomo, the hero who made the Mantis a Great Clan, and his daughter Yoritomo Kumiko, for whom Kyuden Kumiko is named. There is a small shrine to Kaimetsu-uo as well, but a much larger temple devoted exclusively to him exists elsewhere on the island so this is one considered secondary in importance.

Among the Fortunes, the two largest shrines are devoted to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth whom most Mantis revere daily, and Suitengu, who is greatly respected if not feared by every living Mantis samurai and peasant. Other popular shrines ones to include Isora, Fortune of the Seashore; Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder and the father of the Clan's founder; and Natsu-Togumara, the Fortune of Travel and Experience.

The current head sensei of the shugenja dojo at the City of Lightning is a middle-aged man named Yoritomo Bukai. Bukai is a masterful sensei, and takes a great personal interest in all the students of his temple. He can be found on a daily basis overseeing lessons in the courtyards and altar chambers, offering support, encouragement, or when necessary, correction to students. He often meets with his other sensei to discuss new methods and offer them advice on their manner of instruction. While this could engender ill will on the part of his subordinates, Bukai is so respectful of his lesser sensei that they almost never take his criticisms personally, but instead are eager to implement his suggestions whenever possible. Secretly, however, Bukai has a less than pure motive for his constant vigilance with regard to his students. As a student himself, he was repeatedly declined the opportunity to study at Tempest Island, and to this day resents the Storm Riders tremendously. His vigorous teaching and supervision stems from a deep personal desire to prove that his students are superior to the elite, arrogant handful of young men and women who emerge each year from Tempest Island. Mantis Clan Champion Yoritomo Naizen is aware of Bukai's motivations, but his work benefits the Clan as a whole, so the Champion has no intention of intervening.

Yakamo Seido

After the death of Lady Amaterasu decades ago, the Moshi had a lengthy period of confusion and adjustment, wherein they were saved from foundering largely due to the influence and assistance from the Yoritomo Family. At that time, while many of their Family chose to pursue more traditional areas of emphasis with regard to their spellcasting, a noticeable section of the Moshi transferred their devotion from the dead Lady Sun to her chosen successor Lord Sun, formerly the mortal Hida Yakamo. This sect was permitted to do as they pleased, and for decades they have paid homage to the sun according to their long-standing traditions. Among their principle activities was the construction of a significant temple devoted both to



Lord Sun and the memory of his heroic actions during his mortal life, called Yakamo Seido. Similar in many respects to the larger and older Amaterasu Seido, Yakamo Seido was the center for this branch of the Family's activities on a daily basis for two generations. The recent and very sudden demise of Yakamo, who was cast down from the Heavens and replaced by the Jade Dragon, has thrown this section of the Moshi into turmoil just as happened to the Family as a whole two generations previously.

On the one hand, they have been through this exact manner of difficulty before, and seen how little it seems to matter how they react to it. On the other, their close association with the Crab, whom they invited to share administration of the temple shortly after its completion, and their status as shugenja would make a failure to revere the Jade Sun somewhat complicated. But the Crab, for their part, have mourned their fallen brother and now choose to revere the Jade Sun just as they did its predecessor. It is a divine being, they believe, and one devoted to purity

in the face of corruption. Furthermore, it defeated Yakamo in honorable combat, and the Crab insist that Yakamo would be the first to acknowledge the superiority of the victor in such a circumstance. In light of this admittedly persuasive argument, the Family has slowly begun to shift its devotion to the Jade Sun, rather than the memory of Lord Sun. It has been and continues to be a very difficult transition, but it progresses. The Crab have been understanding, and largely avoid discussion the matter with the Moshi who share the temple with them.

The current head of Yakamo Seido is a headstrong woman named Moshi Yoshinaka. She was chosen for the position because of her forthright — some might say blunt, nature. It was believed by the Family leadership that regular interaction with the Crab would require someone that could earn their respect by functioning on a similar social level. While the gambit was somewhat risky, it has paid off famously, and Yoshinaka is well known and respected among the Kuni who frequent the temple. She has a stand-



ing invitation to study at the dojo in the Crab lands, but thus far she has politely declined in order to maintain her position at Yakamo Seido.

Masters of Magic: The Mantis

Kitsune Hisano

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 3 Void: 3
Intelligence: 3

Honor: 2.8 Status: 1.4 Glory: 1.3

ADVANTAGES: Blood of Spirits (Spirit Sense),

SCHOOL/RANK: Kitsune Shugenja 2, Great Potential (Medicine)

DISADVANTAGES: Fascination (Kitsune Mori)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 1, Defense 2, Hunting 4, Medicine (Herbalism) 5, Meditation 2, Spellcraft 2, Staves 3

Many among the Kitsune were distraught at the notion of their Family joining the Mantis Clan, but Kitsune Hisano was not among them. In truth, very little has ever really bothered Hisano; he simply does not pay a great deal of attention to the events of the world around him. Instead, his focus is, and always has been, on the beauty and secrets of the Kitsune Mori. Given the additional information and research the Moshi and Yoritomo shugenja have given the Kitsune, and how they have in turn used it to repair damage inflicted upon the forest, Hisano is among this Family's greatest supporters of the union.

As a child, Hisano wandered away from his parents' home and was lost in the Kitsune Mori for eight days. His parents were frantic to find him, and no expense was spared in scouring the forest searching for the little boy. After a week, many believed he was dead, including his parents. On the eighth day, however, he was discovered in a fox's den, sleeping soundly alongside a vixen and her litter. The area where Hisano was found had been searched thoroughly by countless samurai looking for him, and there was simply no way he could have been overlooked so many times. The consensus of the searchers was that

the boy could only have been shielded by the spirits during his time in the forest, and that they had returned him safely to his family. Hisano's parents did not particularly care why the spirit creatures had done so; they were simply grateful to have him back, and gave thanks to the Fortunes every day for the rest of their lives that their only son was returned to them.

His entire life, Hisano has been fascinated with the Kitsune Mori. His Family and sensei have tolerated his unnatural obsession because they believe that his experience as a boy has marked him as a true child of the spirits. The as yet unexplained assault on the Family from unknown forces from within the forest has been an extremely traumatic event for the young shugenja, and in the wake of its apparent resolution, he has worked harder than anyone to attempt to repair the damage done, both to the forest itself and to the spiritual bond between it and his people.

KITSUNE MIZURU

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
Perception: 4				

Honor: 3.1	Status: 3.3	Glory: 4.1
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SCHOOL/RANK: Kitsune Shugenja 2 / Shapeshifter
School 2 (see *Creatures of Rokugan*)

ADVANTAGES: Absolute Direction, Balance, Clear Thinker

DISADVANTAGES: Lost Love, Soft-Hearted

SKILLS: Animal Handling 4, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Hunting 6, Instruction 6, Knives 3, Lore: Myth & Legend 3, Medicine (Herbalism) 5, Meditation 6, Spellcraft 5, Storytelling 3, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 4

SPIRIT POWERS: Alias, Crystal Touch, Eyes of Night, Humanity, Hunter's Bane, Spirit Vision

TABOOS: May not drink alcohol (1 point); may not tell anyone of his true nature or allow it to be spoken of in his presence (4 points)

There are few men among the Kitsune Family who are more beloved by the peasants who have served them for generations than Kitsune Mizuru. Even though the bond between master and vassal is particularly close with the Kitsune, Mizuru is revered almost as a father figure by many, and in turn he looks upon those who serve him like one might look upon children placed in his care. If his duties were performed in a more prominent setting

somewhere in the Empire, then his relationship with his vassals would certainly attract attention from more traditional samurai. As it is, however, Mizuru's post is in the remote and virtually isolated Kitsune Mori Mura, deep within the vast Kitsune forest, and visitors to his domain are exceptionally rare. This is how Mizuru prefers it, for he has a tremendous secret that he must keep at all costs: he is not human.

The man who might have been Kitsune Mizuru died as an infant, the victim of a terrible fever that claimed many lives that season. When his mother discovered his death in the middle of the night, her overwhelming grief was so powerful, so primal, that it resonated throughout the spirits dwelling within the forest. One particularly curious kitsune spirit came to investigate, and was so moved by the woman's unbearable pain that it took her son's place, transforming itself into a human infant to bring her the comfort she so desperately craved. In her grief and desperation, the woman accepted the new infant without hesitation, and convinced herself that the death she had discovered was nothing more than a terrible dream.

The spirit that has become Kitsune Mizuru has lived almost half a century among the Kitsune Family, and for large periods has allowed its true self to become submerged within the persona it has created. Mizuru is, for all intents and purposes, a human, and is without question a loyal samurai who serves his Family and Clan without hesitation or reservation. If, over the years, there have been instances when Mizuru has known things that most others would never have, either obscure lore or brilliant intuition, then it has been attributed to his reputation as a scholar and a shugenja of exceptional skill and power.

The recent unpleasantness that has plagued the Kitsune Mori has been a matter of great concern to Mizuru. His beloved village had to be briefly abandoned during the height of the crisis, when mysterious assailants would appear from the shadows and strike at the Kitsune before disappearing as quickly as they arrived. Before the Mantis Clan intervened, and the Kitsune swore their fealty to them, the enigma of the plight was the only thing in over half a century had had forced Mizuru to consider the notion of abandoning his façade, in hopes of discovering the truth. Even now that the threat appears to have passed following the Yoritomo's intervention, Mizuru suspects that something far worse than any imagine is brewing deep within the forest he loves so much. He fears alarming those under his charge, however, so he reveals nothing

of his inner turmoil. Instead, he has quietly been offering whatever support he can to a group of young magistrates intent on discovering the truth behind what happened in the Kitsune Mori.

Moshi Kekiesu, Student of the Ivory Kingdoms

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 3
Reflexes: 4 Willpower: 5

Honor: 1.4 Status: 2.6 Glory: 5.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Moshi Shugenja 2 / Moshi Navigator 1 / Ivory Sahir 1

ADVANTAGES: Forbidden Knowledge, Languages (Ningyo, Ruhmal)

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (associated with Bloodspeakers), Cruel

SKILLS: Athletics (Swimming) 4, Calligraphy 1, Craft: Sailing 4, Divination 1, Instruction 3, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 6, Meditation 2, Navigation 4, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 5, Spellcraft (Maho) 6, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 5, Underworld 3

There is no measure by which Moshi Kekiesu is not an aberration of the samurai caste, even among the individualistic and most non-traditional members of the Mantis Clan. Even as a child she was prone to embracing anything new and different, and she caused her parents a great deal of difficulty even before she entered the temple to study to serve her Clan as a shugenja. Her sensei found her no less difficult, but they were significantly less compassionate and sympathetic than her loving parents, and in very short order Kekiesu discovered that her years in the temple would be difficult indeed.

Upon her gempukku, Kekiesu received an appointment to serve as the first mate and navigator of a Yoritomo ocean-going vessel. For a time she found that life more to her liking, embracing the wild freedom of the waves, but it too came to chafe as she was given more and more duties formerly held by her older, ailing superior, the ship's captain. The young woman began to despair that her life would never be more than restriction and rules, when she was assigned to a new vessel.

On her new vessel, Kekiesu found her captain to be far more sympathetic to her personality than anyone she had ever known. He too, it seemed, labored under the restrictions of the samurai caste. They grew to be close friends over the course of a year, although neither seemed to have

any romantic interest in the other, and finally, he revealed the truth: The captain was a Bloodspeaker. Rather than being outraged, Kekiesu was intrigued. By the time the summer season came again, she had joined the cult as well.

The fall of Iuchiban did not affect Kekiesu overmuch. She had never joined out of belief in the cult's master, or even his philosophy toward Rokugan's governance. She simply wanted to be allowed to pursue whatever piqued her interest, and the cult generally supported such notions. When Iuchiban issued his final command to his followers upon his death, the infamous order to "kill them all," Kekiesu resisted. She defended herself against the other Bloodspeakers aboard her ship, and killed the captain herself. The non-cultist crewmen celebrated her as a hero, something that disturbed her, for she had no wish to attract attention to herself. Some months later, Kekiesu was summoned to the Mantis Clan Champion, and she feared that her life was at last at an end.

Yoritomo Kumiko, the Mantis Champion at the time, said nothing to Kekiesu for a long time, instead only staring at her. Finally, the young woman asked a single question: "Have you any remorse whatsoever for what you've done?" Kekiesu was taken aback by the question, but after only a moment's consideration, she answered truthfully: "Yes." Kumiko nodded. Having overcome the stain of the Shadowlands Taint herself, it seemed that the Mantis Champion believed that Kekiesu deserved a chance at redemption, and thus chose Kekiesu to travel to the distant Ivory Kingdoms to study with the Clan's allies there.

Kekiesu was gone for almost two years, including a year of study and months upon months of travel via kobune to reach her destination and then return. The woman who returned bears little resemblance to the woman who departed, however. Where once there was a wild, carefree spirit willing to embrace any new experience, now there is a cold, calculating, disciplined woman with frightening power at her command. Thus far she has never been called upon to teach her newfound secrets to others, because frankly no one within the Clan understands whether or not the new magic she practices is corrupt or not. Among his first actions as the new Mantis Clan Champion, Yoritomo Naizen had Kekiesu evaluated by the Kuni Witch Hunters. They found no trace of any Taint within her, but privately advised Naizen to watch her closely, as they found her extremely unsettling. Despite this, Kekiesu continues to serve her Clan to the best of her ability, and

is called on periodically to use her unique talents to deal with problems none other can deal with. For now, she is content to serve without ambition.

For now.

Moshi Kiyomori

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 2 Water: 4 Void: 3

Reflexes: 4 Stamina: 4 Intelligence: 3

Honor: 3.3 Status: 2.4 Glory: 4.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Shugenja 2 / Storm Rider 1

ADVANTAGES: Daredevil, Friend of the Elements (Water)

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Overconfident

SKILLS: Athletics (Swimming) 3, Calligraphy 1, Craft: Sailing 5, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Sailing 2, Lore: the Seas 5, Spellcraft 4, Theology (Fortunes) 5

Moshi Kiyomori was marked at an early age as a talented young man with considerable gifts for speaking to the kami. Despite what the Empire at large might think, it was not at all uncommon for young men of the Family to be born with the ability to become a shugenja, and Kiyomori

started his studies in the temple alongside many male and female cousins. His gifts for speaking to the kami were average, and in the beginning there was no appreciable difference in his performance versus that of his comrades. Kiyomori was well liked by his fellow students, however, for he had a very outgoing and sociable nature, and whenever a topic arose in which he had difficulty, he was quick to seek out a friend more talented in that area to assist him. In this manner Kiyomori rose to the top of his class, largely by standing on the shoulders of his friends. Kiyomori was delighted to find that, as his gempukku grew near, his sensei were seriously discussing sending him as the Family's representative to the Topaz Championship in the Crane provinces.

The Topaz Championship proved far more difficult than anything Kiyomori had previously experienced. The other contestants were not interested in his friendship, and they were certainly not going to help him cover up his deficiencies. Suddenly Kiyomori had to consider the possibility that he could be in over his head. Worse, if he failed disastrously, his entire Family would be shamed. Kiyomori doubled his efforts and began giving everything he had to each contest, and in doing so he began to attract at-



tention. His earnestness impressed even those who had (rightly) marked him as something of a dilettante, including one of his kinsfolk, Yoritomo Satako. Satako, believing the Championship impossible to win for herself, instead targeted those who had thus far performed better than Kiyomori, and attempted to defeat them, lowering their scores and slowly advancing Kiyomori to the top of the pack. Between the two of them, victory was assured. For his part, Kiyomori did not discover Satako's role until well after he had been declared Topaz Champion, and while part of him wished to give her the reward that he had received, he knew such would never be permitted. So he remained the victor.

Since being inducted into the Storm Riders as the youngest shugenja ever to bear that honor, Kiyomori has struggled to earn the favor that has been heaped upon

him by his Clan. He participated in the War of Fire and Thunder, and was personally responsible for the destruction of no less than five Dark Wave vessels. He was among the Storm Riders who participated in the funeral of their master, Yoritomo Kaigen, and he was present one year later when Moshi Sayoko was formally chosen to succeed Kaigen. Although a tremendous supporter of Sayoko, Kiyomori has chosen to maintain distance between them, fearing perhaps that those who questioned her appointment to Master Sensei would use any association between them as evidence that she would favor her own Family over the Yoritomo. At present, Kiyomori has accepted a position as the Chief Shirekan of the Third Storm, the Mantis fleet tasked with protecting Kaigen's Island and overseeing all Mantis shipping along the northern Rokugani coast. As such, he is frequently found in Broken Wave City, the settlement on Kaigen's Island, or



in court at Kyuden Kumiko, also on the island, assisting his rikugunshokan Yoritomo Jera.

MOSHI SAYOKO, MASTER OF TEMPEST ISLAND

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 4
Awareness: 5 Intelligence: 6

Honor: 3.8 Status: 6.4 Glory: 5.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Moshi Shugenja 4 / Storm Rider 2

ADVANTAGES: Ally (Shinjo Turong 1/4), Blessings of the Elements (Water), Jurojin's Blessing, Sage

DISADVANTAGES: Small, True Love, Unlucky (3 points)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Craft: Sailing 4, Divination 4, Instruction 7, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 4, Lore: the Seas 5, Meditation 4, Spellcraft (Water, Yoritomo Shugenja School) 7, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes) 6

Throughout her childhood and training, Moshi Sayoko felt out of place. Her spirit was not calm and tranquil like so many of her Family, and she always felt as though she belonged elsewhere. Sayoko was a dutiful daughter and student, however, and never belied her disquiet to her Family. Upon her graduation, she was assigned to serve in the Mantis fleets, the most common posting for young Moshi shugenja not selected to administer the temples in their Family's provinces. Sayoko accepted her assignment without complaint, but dreaded it greatly.

As it turns out, she need not have worried. Sayoko loved the sea. Everything about her assignment was glorious to her, and she was much beloved by even the surliest Yoritomo serving aboard her vessel. Over the course of a few years, she served aboard five different vessels, and by the end of her fifth year, Sayoko had friends all throughout the second Mantis fleet, also known as the Second Storm. Among the friends she made during this time was an older shugenja named Yoritomo Iongi, who in turn introduced her to his sensei. Sayoko was more surprised than anyone when Iongi's sensei recommended her to attend Tempest Island, and even more so when she was immediately accepted. There were those who spoke out against her admittance, but they quieted quickly when they realized that her sponsor was none other than Yoritomo Komori, the personal advisor of the Mantis Champion and a lifelong friend of Yoritomo Kaigen, the Master of Tempest Island.

Sayoko flourished at Tempest Island, even more so than she had among the Second Storm. The teachings of the sensei there appealed to her natural talents and abilities, and in a relatively short time she had gained the favor of

Kaigen, the Master of Tempest Island. She became like a daughter to him, but he was a stern father, and no one could ever have accused him of favoritism. When the time came for Sayoko to be inducted formally into the ranks of the Storm Riders, Kaigen himself oversaw the ceremony.

Through sheer happenstance, Sayoko was among the Mantis present when the call went to rally to Toturi III at the Tomb of the Seven Thunders. She willingly accompanied her brothers in arms into the Shadowlands, and fought off the horde of oni who came for the blood of the last Toturi Emperor. Sayoko fought bravely, to the point of absolute exhaustion, without care that her very soul might be in jeopardy from casting spells so deep within the Shadowlands. Fortunately, the benevolent aura of the Tomb protected her spirit, and when she fell in battle a warrior named Shinjo Turong protected her. Grievously wounded, she was unconscious during the entire retreat from the Tomb back to the Empire, and awoke only as the group crossed the Great Carpenter Wall. Although initially angry to be slung across Turong's horse like so much dead weight, Sayoko was grateful for his intervention, and the two have been corresponding ever since. Her feelings for Turong are a source of tremendous confusion and frustration for the priestess.

Unfortunately, Yoritomo Kaigen did not survive the War of Fire and Thunder. After much deliberation, the new Mantis Champion, Yoritomo Naizen, selected Sayoko to replace her dead master as the master sensei of Tempest Island. Sayoko was completely shocked at the appointment, so much so that she went well beyond normal decorum when politely refusing her Champion, strongly urging him to select any of a number of other candidates she felt were far more suitable to the task. Naizen would hear nothing of it, however, and in the end Sayoko accepted the position.

MOSHI ROKURO, CAPTAIN OF THE LEGACY

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4
Perception: 4

Honor: 2.0 Status: 4.1 Glory: 5.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 1 / Tsuruchi Swordsman 1 / Yoritomo Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Absolute Direction, Allies (Crew), Daredevil, Quick, Voice

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Pirate), Driven, Unlucky

KATA: Striking as Fire, Striking of the Cliff's Edge

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Commerce 3, Craft: Sailing

3, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (Tsuruchi Longbow) 4, Lore: Gaijin Cultures 1, Medicine 2, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 4, Stealth 2

Rokuro was born the son of a shamed Moshi priestess and an unknown Yoritomo bushi. As a child, he showed no talent to speak with the kami, and because his mother did not want her son to follow in his father's shady activities at sea, he was sent to Kyuden Ashinagabachi for training. But soon, Rokuro found that his father's blood was too strong within him to resist. He took a chance to study the sword when his Tsuruchi sensei offered it, and then he was sent to Kyuden Gotei, to learn the seafaring Way of the Mantis.

It didn't take long for the boy to realize that the Fortunes weren't especially generous with him. He fell in love with a Yoritomo maiden, who was killed only weeks later by an accident. Also, whatever task was given to him by his sensei was always accompanied by strange happenings that more often than not left him with scars to show the incredulous. At one point, Rokuro learned that his father had repeatedly assaulted Crane ports in his years of piracy and caused much suffering to common folk, something that Rokuro struggled hard to accept. The young man grew stronger through these events, though, taking the famous Yoritomo and Tsuruchi as examples of how ambition and the will to accomplish great things despite all odds can pay off in the end.

Two years after his gempukku, Rokuro was offered a position as kobune captain. Most recently, his ship, *The Legacy*, has been sent to root out pirate vessels, and is manned with capable sailors and samurai who have come to live and die for their captain. Rokuro has vowed to protect the fishermen and heimin all along the coast, in secret defiance of his father's deeds, no matter their Clan. The Crane believe this to be an interference with their own seafaring rights, and after an incident in which it which sank a renowned Crane ship, *The Legacy* has received an undue reputation as pirate vessel.

Rokuro doesn't care. He strives only to protect those who can't protect themselves, and the peasants along the coast know him and his men as samurai who keep the waters clean of trouble. Now and then, *The Legacy* even allows some money to find its way into a poor fisherman's purse, and the heimin love Rokuro for it.

Rokuro is not a shugenja, nor does he have any particular experience with priests of the kami save for those rare occasions when one has been stationed aboard his ship (against

his wishes). However, because of his close relationship with the lower castes, Rokuro has an excellent network of connections with the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Monks who know Rokuro best are aware of his somewhat questionable nature and activities, but because of his charity to the heimen they believe that he is capable of great things if he can but be persuaded to put aside his avarice and embrace his selflessness. Thus far, they have had no success, but the members of the Brotherhood are both patient and confident. In the meantime, they are happy to share their knowledge with Rokuro. They know that if they are valuable to him, he will continue to come back to see them again and again, giving them additional chances to encourage his spiritual awakening.

YORITOMO YAGAMI

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 3
		Agility: 4	Strength: 4	
Honor: 2.9	Status: 1.3		Glory: 3.2	

SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 2 / Sons of Kaimetsu-uo 1

ADVANTAGES: Hands of Stone, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Bente's Curse, Forsaken

KIHO: Air Fist, Ebb and Flow

SKILLS: Athletics (Swimming) 3, Battle 1, Commerce 2, Craft: Sailing 3, Defense 4, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Sailing 4, Meditation 2, Peasant Weapons (Kama, Parangu) 5, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 4

From the moment he first entered the dojo to begin bushi training, Yoritomo Yagami has been a problem for virtually everyone around him. The poor temperament so common among Yoritomo adolescents showed itself in him years ahead of schedule, was worse in severity, and never abated even years after he came of age. He was reprimanded by his sensei more than any other student, and he was the subject of much scorn from his classmates. Yagami did not seem to care, and seemed to draw his only enjoyment in life from conflict with others. Since he dwelled on the Islands of Silk & Spice, the only available targets for his animosity were the members of his own extended family. It came as a surprise to many that Yagami was permitted to graduate and undergo the gempukku ceremony, but it surprised no one at all when he was given a series of thoroughly unpleasant and virtually pointless assignments thereafter.

One of a series of grossly unimportant placements found Yagami assigned to a lesser temple maintained by the Temple of Kaimetsu-uo on one of the smaller Man-

tis Islands. There was virtually nothing else on the island save for the temple and a small dock, and Yagami nearly went out of his mind with boredom. After several months, one of the brother monks, with whom the young bushi had had virtually no interaction whatsoever, invited him to spar. Yagami virtually leapt at the chance, and was soundly defeated by a man far smaller and significantly older than he was. Irritated, Yagami made another attempt the following day, with the same results. He tried over and over again, and was defeated almost effortlessly each time, for nearly a month. Finally, his anger completely burned out and his spirit all but broken, Yagami asked the monk why he could not be defeated.

"Because," the brother replied, "I do not care if I win or not."

The statement made no sense whatsoever to the young bushi. What was there in life but to fight and defeat others? The monk simply smiled and explained that when one focused on the end, the means suffered. He further invited Yagami to train alongside the monks. The young man readily agreed, envisioning a day when he could defeat any who crossed him without effort, and when all would fear his name.

That day never came.

Training in the temple slowly changed Yagami. It opened his eyes to how he had allowed his anger to overshadow everything else in his life. He was nothing more than a beast, a slaving animal incapable of maintaining any sort of successful relationship with others or even fulfilling his duties. He put his anger away and embraced self-discipline, honing his mind as well as his body. And in time, he became an accepted member of the temple, despite that he was not a monk.

Those who knew Yagami as a youth barely recognize him now. The perpetual scowl by which he was always known is gone, and in its place is a thoughtful, if still somewhat severe, expression. He is well known as a warrior, and respected for his self-discipline. Those who remember what he was like wonder what could have wrought such a change, and in that regard the young man is a shining example of what the Sons of Kaimetsu-uo hope to accomplish in their attempt to marry the Yoritomo Family and the Temple of Kaimetsu-uo.

YORITOMO YOYONAGI

Air: 5	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Intelligence: 5 Perception: 6				

Honor: 2.2	Status: 6.4	Glory: 4.8
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SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Courtier 3 / Yoritomo Shugenja 2

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Multiple), Dangerous Beauty, Multiple Schools, Social Position

DISADVANTAGES: Cruel, Greedy, Jealousy

SKILLS: Athletics (Swimming) 2, Calligraphy 3, Commerce (Appraisal) 3, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 7, Deceit (Intimidation, Lying, Seduction) 6, Defense 2, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Sincerity) 6, Lore: Sailing 2, Spellcraft 3, Storytelling (Poetry) 5, Theology 2, Underworld 3

There are very few individuals within the Mantis Clan who command the same amount of influence and respect as Yoritomo Yoyonagi, a fact in which she delights on an almost daily basis. She is the head of the Clan's delegation to the Imperial Court, and answers directly to her Champion, Yoritomo Naizen, and none others.

Until the recent acceptance of Yoritomo Kiyomori as a student at Tempest Island, Yoyonagi held the record as that most illustrious temple's youngest student. Although it is never discussed, she is considered something of a disappointment to the sensei there, as she used her incredible skill at manipulating others to gain her appointment, and upon arriving there, demonstrated very little skill in actually entreating the kami. It was ultimately a fortuitous placement, however, for one of her sensei, while overwhelmingly disgusted with the very idea that she had gained admittance under false pretenses, recognized her true talents. After only two extremely unpleasant and uneventful years at Tempest Island, Yoyonagi was quietly allowed to transfer her tutelage to the sensei of the Yoritomo Courtier School at Toshi no Inazuma.

Yoyonagi flourished as a student of the courtier sensei. Although she was years behind other students in her training, her natural ability to perceive others' true motives and manipulate them accordingly immediately placed her in the forefront of the court's students. In less than a year she received an appointment to a major Mantis court, and even upon arrival her name was on the lips of many. Less than two years after her appointment to the courtier School, Yoyonagi took her place as a minor attendant in the Imperial Court. Her rise since then can only be described as meteoric.

Yoyonagi's time in court has not been without complication. Although she has risen to the head of the Mantis delegation, there have been obstacles that were difficult for her to overcome. Among the first was a fellow Mantis, a minor functionary named Moshi Mogai, who was completely obsessed with her. Mogai was little more than an inconvenience until he succumbed to the Rain of Blood, after which he became a genuine threat, requiring that a heavy guard of yojimbo be assigned to Yoyonagi. Another significant challenge arrived in the form of mysterious woman, rumored to be a former geisha, named Sachina, who was offered fealty to the Mantis as part of a pact with Kaneka, the Shogun. Sachina proved to be the equal of Yoyonagi in almost every respect, and the two were at odds for some time. Now they play out their struggles through subordinates, and through the manipulation of others Clans, so that the Mantis benefits from their rivalry regardless of who gains the upper hand.

Recently, Yoyonagi was mildly surprised to find herself appointed to the position of Amethyst Champion. This new position has afforded her unprecedented influence and access to literally any court convened anywhere within the Empire of Rokugan. Yoyonagi has not hesitated to make use of these abilities, and continues to push the agenda of her Champion as much as is possible. She is aware of the new level of scrutiny facing her, however, and in order to prevent a backlash, she has become more subtle and more demure when appearing in court. This has been a terrible blow to her many fellow court attendees, particularly her male would-be-suitors, who were tremendous admirers of her previous attire.

New Mechanics

New Advantages

Blessings of the Elements: Thunder [Inherent] (4 points)

The kami favor certain shugenja, and for whatever reason, the kami servants of the Thunder Dragon have chosen you to receive their blessing. Your nature is that of thunder, alternately raging and docile, powerful and unstoppable when your ire is roused, and yet quick to dissipate once your anger has been placated. You may only

purchase this Advantage if you have an Affinity for Air or Fire, or if you have no Affinity. You may spend 1 Void Point to gain a +8 to bonus to any Contested Roll. This bonus increases to +10 if you possess the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage applied to your opponent. You may spend a Void Point in this manner in addition to any other Void Point expenditures made during the round as part of the Contested Roll, even if you may not normally spend more than 1 Void Point per round.

Blood of Spirits [Inherent] (Variable)

The blood of spirits in human form runs in your veins, and you command some tiny fraction of their power, even though you do not fully understand it. You may spend Character Points to gain Spirit Points, which may then be spent to purchase Spirit Powers. Each Power purchased costs a number of Character Points equal to 3 x its cost in Spirit Points. Powers that may be purchased in this manner include: Eyes of the Night, Ghost Tongue, Spirit Sense, and Spirit Vision.

Friend of the Elements: Thunder [Inherent] (10 points)

Although the Thunder Dragon does not possess the countless legions of kami servants that the Elemental Dragons possess, there are a fair number of Fire and Air kami that serve it, as well as many ryu spirits that occasionally venture into the mortal realm on its behalf. For whatever reason, these spirits favor you above others, and you feel a kinship with them as well. You may speak freely to Fire and Air kami as if you were making use of the Commune basic spell; however, you may only do this during thunderstorms, and only when you are within the area affected by the storm in question. Additionally, when you spend a Void Point to gain a Free Raise on any Raw Trait Roll using one of the Physical Traits (Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, Strength), you also gain a bonus to the roll equal to your Insight Rank.

New Advanced Schools

Champions of Thunder (Shugenja)

The so-called Champions of Thunder are a peculiar group of samurai who practice a theology that many on the mainland might consider blasphemous. Instead of placing their reverence in the Tao of Shinsei or the For-

tunes, as is the norm for most shugenja, the Champions of Thunder are zealously devoted to the Thunder Dragon, a force of nature that exists outside the traditional understanding of the universe. This is highly unconventional, and looked upon by many with suspicion if not outright disdain.

Still, many among the Mantis look upon the Thunder Dragon as a kindred spirit; it is a divine being that exists outside of the Elements, much as the Mantis are a Great

Clan that exists outside the divinely mandated Clans founded by the Kami. Furthermore, the Thunder Dragon is the patron of heroes, and many Mantis consider themselves roguish heroes, devoted to protecting those whom the other Great Clans have forgotten or simply overlooked. That the Thunder Dragon was the parent of Osano-Wo, father of Kaimetsu-uo, founder of the Mantis Clan, only strengthens this bond. Although there were a handful of those who devoted themselves to the study of



and reverence for the Thunder Dragon in previous generations, the blessing of the dragon upon Yoritomo Naizen, the current Clan Champion, and his possession of the Thunder Helm, has given them the justification they need to formally establish their order within the Clan's ranks.

REQUIREMENTS:

RINGS/TRAIT: Fire 3, Void 3

SKILLS: Jiu-jitsu 3, Lore: Elemental Dragons 3, Theology (Fortunes) 3

OTHER: Must possess one Blessing of the Elements (Thunder) or Friend of the Elements (Thunder) Advantage

Techniques:

RANK 1: BLESSINGS OF THUNDER

The blessings of the Thunder Dragon strengthen those who are strong enough to bear them. You gain a bonus of +3k0 to any roll made to resist Fear, or to resist any effect that would force you to sleep or otherwise lose consciousness (including spells, poisons, diseases, or any other effect). Effects that target you that do not normally allow you to roll to avoid sleep, such as the spell *Wind-Borne Slumbers*, have the TN of any roll needed to invoke them (such as a the *Spellcasting Roll*) increased by 10.

RANK 2: FAVOR OF THE STORM

The essence of Thunder permeates your every action, giving you power such as most have never seen. By expending a Void Point when casting a spell, you may change its element to Thunder. This effectively prevents the spell from being targeted with *Counterspell* save by another Champion of Thunder, and can allow it to overcome wards or bindings that prohibit certain Elemental effects.

RANK 3: RIDE THE DRAGON

Those who serve the Thunder Dragon sacrifice all in the name of heroism. You may sacrifice an unused spell slot to negate all Wounds that you have suffered in a single Wound Rank. This may be done instantly as you suffer Wounds, and does not count as an action. Alternatively, you may voluntarily suffer 1 Wound Rank's worth of Wounds in order to gain an additional spell slot. These Wounds may not be avoided, redirected, or healed magically. This does not result in a physical wound, and as such is not considered maho or any other form of blood magic.

Storm Riders (Shugenja)

The Storm Riders are possibly the most legendary of all Mantis shugenja, and command the respect of any who have come into conflict with the Mantis anywhere near the sea. The Storm Riders are the true masters of Tempest Island, although they are not the only students who study there. Many have confused the Storm Riders with a different sect of the Mantis warriors, the Orochi Riders, but the two are separate groups. Now that the Orochi Riders have fallen out of favor, some of their number of rejoined the Storm Riders while others have gone on to find other duties within the Clan.

The name Storm Rider carries an inordinate amount of influence among the Yoritomo Family, many of whom regard them with a mixture of awe and fear. They have been elevated by rumor and word of mouth to something almost more than human, commanding power that perhaps mortals should not have. While there are certainly those among the Storm Riders who have power nearly unimaginable to non-shugenja (which is almost certainly true with every elite group of shugenja in the Empire), most are simply highly-trained and particularly focused shugenja.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAIT: Water 4, Stamina 4

SKILLS: Craft: Sailing 4, Lore: The Seas 5, Theology (Fortunes) 5

OTHER: Friend of the Elements (Water) Advantage or Blessing of the Elements (Water) Advantage; must possess at least three Water spells of Mastery Level 3 or higher as Innate Abilities

SPECIAL: Only characters who are members of the Mantis Clan and who are students of a Mantis Clan Shugenja School may join the Storm Riders. Students of the Yoritomo School may ignore any one Advantage requirement.

Techniques:

RANK 1: STRENGTH OF SUITENGU


The Storm Riders possess an understanding of Water that most Phoenix would envy. When casting a Water spell, you may call 2 Raises to double the area of effect or the range of the spell. This is possible regardless of normal Raise restrictions on the spell. If Raises are normally allowed for area or range, the effects of all Raises for those purposes are doubled.

RANK 2: CHILD OF OSANO-WO

Osano-Wo watches over his children, and his fury never touches them. By spending a Void Point, you may completely avoid any wind or water-based damage. This includes natural phenomenon like weather, hurricanes, or drowning, in which case the effect lasts for 1 hour. If the damage is from an supernatural source, such as a spell or from a creature such as a Water kami, the effect lasts only for 1 round, but may be extended by spending 1 Void Point per round.

RANK 3: THE THUNDER UNLEASHED

The sea's secrets are at the Storm Rider's command. So long as you cast only Water spells or spells that affect the weather in some way (such as *Fury of Osano-Wo* or *Tempest of Air*, for example), you gain an additional Complex Action per turn that may only be used for casting a spell. This would allow you to cast 2 Mastery Level 1 spells in 1 round, or a higher Mastery Level spell in fewer rounds than it would normally require.



New Paths

Ivory Sahir (Shugenja)

The Mantis are one of very few Clans to have had extensive contact with gaijin cultures in living memory. The Mantis have quietly maintained contact with the Ivory Kingdoms a region far south and west of the Empire. At different points in history, the Mantis have considered the Kingdoms alternately enemies and allies. In recent years, however, they have been allies, and at one point they exchanged warrior-ambassadors so that the two cultures might learn more about one another. The Ivory Kingdoms representative, Rama Singh, swore fealty to the Mantis Clan and has remained there despite the expiration of the agreement. The Mantis representative has returned to the Empire with a strange new form of magic that no one in Rokugan has ever seen before. As of yet, Moshi Kekiesu has not passed the secrets she learned in that distant land on to others, but she is amenable to the idea of taking on students if there are those who prove themselves worthy.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Mantis Shugenja School at Rank 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Yoritomo Shugenja 1 (or the appropriate Rank, if this was your previous School)

REQUIREMENTS: Must train with the sahir of the Ivory Kingdoms, or one of their students

TECHNIQUE: CLEANSING THE BLOOD

The sahir of the Ivory Kingdoms have magic that can be dramatically different, and far more sinister, than that of Rokugan's shugenja. You may cast maho spells without spilling blood or gaining the Shadowlands Taint. In order to do so, you must spend a number of Void Points equal to the spell's Mastery Level. By doing so, you avoid the need to inflict Wounds and the consequences of gaining the Shadowlands Taint.

Kitsune Spirit Guide (Shugenja)

There are fewer Families in the Empire with as close a connection to the spirit realms than the Kitsune. Even among them, however, there are a few rare souls born in each generation that possess an affinity for all things spiritual that simply defies explanation. These individuals can see the world of spirits overlapping with their own, and from childhood make little distinction between the two. This is fortunate, as it allows such individuals to be easily identified at a young age and trained to deal with their gifts. At the same time, it is unfortunate, for there have been many among the Kitsune with this gift who have not survived it with their sanity intact. They are similar to the ishiken of the Phoenix Clan in that regard, but it has long been theorized by Family scholars that this particular gift is a result of the introduction of kitsune spirit blood into several of the major bloodlines within the Kitsune Family. If this is the case, then there are individuals within the Clan who literally have the blood of spirit creatures in their veins, and the impact of it can easily be seen.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Kitsune Shugenja 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Kitsune Shugenja 2

TECHNIQUE: ONE WITH THE REALMS

Spirit creatures are among your closest friends, and part of their powers reside in your very soul. You gain 8 points with which you may purchase Spirit Powers, just as if you were a spirit member of the Shapeshifter School (see *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition* for information

on the Shapeshifter School and Spirit Powers). You may only purchase powers of Mastery Level 1 or 2. Your home realm is considered to be Ningen-do, and you are considered human for all purposes other than that you are using a Spirit Power.

Moshi Navigator (Shugenja)

Since their induction into the Mantis Clan, the Moshi have settled into a comfortable niche as the Clan's predominant shugenja Family. The Yoritomo might be flashier and attract more attention, but they are considerably fewer in number and depended heavily upon the Moshi to get their School established properly in the first place. Likewise the induction of the Kitsune, while a matter of popular discussion in courts and temples across the Empire, has not weakened the Moshi's position at all because of the wildly disparate nature of the two Families' traditions; the Kitsune serve in other ways, allowing the Moshi to continue their duties uninterrupted. Principal among these duties is serving aboard the countless ships in the Mantis fleets.

Moshi navigators are skilled in a number of time-honored arts above and beyond their natural magical affinities. They are trained to be fully skilled navigators even without their ability to speak to the kami, but in tandem, the two ensure that virtually no Mantis vessel is ever lost at sea.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

PATH OF ENTRY: Moshi Shugenja 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Moshi Shugenja 2

REQUIREMENTS: Craft: Sailing 2, Navigation 2

TECHNIQUE: THE FORTUNES' GUIDANCE

While the Yoritomo excel at rousing the sea's wrath, the Moshi instead choose to focus on placating it, that their Mantis brothers might find safe passage through Suitengu's domain. These abilities are not without applications in battle, either. When faced with any weather phenomenon, whether natural or magical, you may spend Void Points to negate it. A simple rainstorm might require only a single Void Point, whereas hurricane-strength winds and



lightning might require 5 or 6 Void Points. When negating a spell that generates a weather effect, you must spend a number of Void Points equal to the spell's Mastery Level. You also gain a bonus equal to your Water Ring to all Craft: Sailing and Navigation Skill Rolls.

Sons of Kaimetsu-uo (Shugenja)

Kaimetsu-uo was the son of Hida Osano-Wo and his fierce Matsu bride, and was one of the most powerful warriors of his day. Those among the Mantis who can trace their ancestry back directly to him are few in number, but enough that an elite group of them has begun to develop their own dojo. This was done with the full sanction of the branch of the Brotherhood of Shinsei who bear Kaimetsu-uo's name, and the two groups work in tandem for the benefit of the Mantis Clan as a whole.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Yoritomo Bushi 2

PATH OF EGRESS: Temple of Kaimetsu-uo Monk 1

REQUIREMENTS: Theology (Fortunes) 3

TECHNIQUE: STEEL AND FLESH

To the true master, flesh can be as steel, and steel can be an implement of the will as surely as the fist. You learn 2 Kiho, for which you must meet all prerequisites. Any Kiho you know or learn in the future, you may deliver via an attack with a peasant weapon rather than an unarmed attack. You may make an additional attack per round.

New Dojo

The following are new dojo available to students of Mantis Schools and Paths. They adhere to all the basic rules outlined for dojo as found in *Emerald Empire*.

Isora's Alliance Temple

SCHOOLS: Four Temples, Moshi Shugenja, Shrine of the Seven Thunders, Temple of Kaimetsu-uo, Temple of Osano-Wo, Temple of the Thousand Fortunes; Students of the Tao

PATHS: Moshi Guardian of the Sun

BENEFIT: Students of Isora's Alliance Temple may purchase the Hotei's Blessing Advantage for 1 point less than usual.

Kyuden Kitsune

SCHOOLS: Kitsune Shugenja, Ronin Yojimbo, Yoritomo Courtier

PATHS: Kitsune Spirit Guide, Minor Clan Diplomat, Woodland Tracker

BENEFIT: Students of Kyuden Kitsune may have 1 additional Emphasis of the Hunting Skill, above what would normally be allowed based on their Skill Rank.

Kitsune Mori Mura

SCHOOLS: Kitsune Shugenja School

PATHS: Kitsune Spirit Guide, Woodland Tracker

BENEFIT: Students of Kitsune Mori Mura may purchase the Friend of the Elements (Earth) and Blessings of the Elements (Earth) Advantages for one point less.

Shrine of Kaze-no-Kami

SCHOOLS: Temple of Osano-Wo, Temples of the Thousand Fortunes, Tsuruchi Magistrate

PATHS: Sons of Kaimetsu-uo, Tsuruchi Swordsman

BENEFIT: Students of the Shrine of Kaze-no-Kami may purchase the Friend of the Elements (Air) and Blessings of the Elements (Air) Advantages for 1 point less.

Temple of the First Wasp

SCHOOLS: Temple of Kaimetsu-uo, Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter, Tsuruchi Magistrate

PATHS: Moshi Guardian of the Sun, Sons of Kaimetsu-uo, Tsuruchi Swordsman

BENEFIT: Students of the Temple of the First Wasp gain Jiu-jutsu as a School Skill. If a character already possesses Jiu-jutsu among their School Skills, they gain an additional Rank that does not count against the number of School Skill Ranks with which they begin play.

Tempest Island

SCHOOLS: Yoritomo Shugenja; Orochi Riders, Storm Riders

PATHS: Storm Acolytes

BENEFIT: Students of Tempest Island may sacrifice any 1 beginning spell that they know and instead gain the Slap the Wave Kiho. Students who join the dojo after character creation instead gain the Kiho in lieu of 1 of the spells gained normally when they next gain an Insight Rank. All prerequisites must be met in order for the Kiho to be used.



Toshi no Inazuma

SCHOOLS: Moshi Shugenja, Temple of Kaimetsu-uo, Yoritomo Courtier, Yoritomo Shugenja; Champions of Thunder

PATHS: Moshi Navigator, Sons of Kaimetsu-uo, Yoritomo Emissary

BENEFIT: Students of Toshi no Inazuma may purchase the Friend of the Elements (Water) and Blessings of the Elements (Water) Advantages for 1 point less.

Yakamo Seido

SCHOOLS: Kuni Shugenja, Moshi Shugenja

PATHS: Moshi Guardian of the Sun

BENEFIT: Students of Yakamo Seido may purchase the Allies Advantage for 1 point less, to a minimum of 1 point, so long as it applies to allies in the Crab or Mantis Clans.

MASTERS OF MAGIC

THE
PHOENIX CLAN

The monk paused at the entrance to the small chamber. He glanced back in surprise, but the servants had already shut the door behind him.

"Is something wrong?" asked a soft voice.

The familiar voice brought a smile to Bushiken's face. He remembered his childhood – hours of meditation and long martial training, performing the most obscure and unorthodox chores at his master's bidding. And always, at the end, the old man was waiting. Always he would ask the same thing, in that same distant, curious, voice.

"And Bushiken, what have you learned?"

Bushiken snapped back to the present. His teacher now lay on a straw pallet on the floor. The old monk was thin and emaciated. The chamber was bare and dimly lit. An unadorned censer offered the hint of burning sandalwood. A scrap of aged parchment hung upon the wall – an ink painting of Shinsei sitting beside a flower. It was not particularly well done, but had been placed so that the monk could see it from where he lay. The only other piece of furniture was the cushion that the servants had placed beside the pallet so that Bushiken might sit.

Bushiken shifted nervously, smoothing one hand over his shaven head as he knelt upon the cushion. He felt a bit awkward. He was dressed in torn, disheveled clothing. He had not even had time to wash properly. Now here he was – facing the lord of the Asako Family. Facing his teacher.

"This is not what I expected, Toshi-sama," he said.

"And what did you expect?" Toshi asked. The aged monk's eyes were clear.

"This doesn't look like a Daimyo's chambers," he said. "At first I thought the servants had locked me in a cell."

Toshi laughed. His weathered face cracked into a familiar, easy grin. "My official chambers are upstairs," he said. "They are as rich and luxurious as you might expect for Kyuden Asako." Toshi sighed. "And I have always felt uncomfortable in them. I requested simple chambers, so that I might depart with as little fanfare as I arrived. I came here as a ronin, you know. The Asako choose their lords in the most peculiar ways."

"You aren't going anywhere," Bushiken said. "You will be ruling Kyuden Asako for decades to come, sensei." Bushiken knew even as he said it that he spoke a lie. The illness that ravaged Toshi's emaciated form was obvious.

"Perhaps," Toshi replied. "If that is so, then why else would you return here?"

Bushiken bowed his head. For many long moments, neither man said anything.

"For ten years I have lived as a ronin," Bushiken said. "I expected punishment for my treachery, for abandoning my duty to my Clan. But no punishment ever came. Even when I returned home, the worst I faced was a cold reception from a few who recognized me. When the soldiers came for me, I expected to be arrested. Instead, they invited me to see you."

"Why would I punish you, Bushiken?" Toshi asked.

"For disagreeing with you," Bushiken said.

Toshi smiled again. "What sort of sensei would punish a student who spoke his mind?" he asked.

"For betraying you, then?" Bushiken asked.

"How have you ever betrayed me?" Toshi asked.

"What else would you call what I did?" Bushiken said.

"Do not mistake your failure for my own," Toshi said. "You were just a boy then. You were not ready to learn the truth about the henshin."

"Youth had nothing to do with it," Bushiken replied. "Even now, I wish I did not know."

"You are a Phoenix," Toshi said. "If the burden of knowledge was so cumbersome, you could have asked a shugenja to help you forget."

"Closing your eyes and throwing a blanket over your head does not douse a fire," Bushiken said. "I felt that my Family – that even you – were the greatest traitors in all the Empire."

"And why is that?" Toshi asked softly.

"Because Isawa-Kami passed the secret of immortality to us, through Shiba, and we hid it from the world," Bushiken answered. "The henshin riddle the Elements in their gilded towers while common people scrape at the dirt to survive. And for all our power and wisdom – we are no less wicked than any other men. I was... I was disgusted. For ten years I wandered the Empire rather than face my own Family again."

"And Bushiken, what have you learned?"

Bushiken looked up Master Toshi. A tear traced a path through the grime on his face. The ancient monk watched

him patiently. Though Asako Toshi's body was wracked by age and disease, there was something potent behind his eyes.

"I learned that man is a living contradiction," Bushiken said. "Man seeks change, but he fears change being thrust upon him. Man yearns for security, but there is no surer path to stagnation than to have all that you desire. Man is inspired to emulate the greatness of others – but only by remaining true to oneself can greatness be achieved."

"And what of Enlightenment?" Toshi asked. "What do you know of that?"

"Nothing," Bushiken said. "I am not certain it exists."

"Oh?" Toshi asked. He smiled faintly. "Yet you still dress and act as a monk – and if what I hear is true – you teach Shinsei's lessons to peasant and samurai alike. Why would you spread the teachings if you do not believe them?"

Bushiken glanced at the painting, then back at his teacher. "I may seek my own path, teacher, but that doesn't mean I cannot appreciate the wisdom Shinsei found during his journey."

"I have failed you, Bushiken," Toshi said. "For ten years, I have failed you. But your wisdom has redeemed that failure." Toshi closed his eyes and coughed softly, his body trembling. Bushiken watched the old man with concern.



"Master, what's wrong?" Bushiken asked. He reached for Toshi's hand, clutching his fingers impulsively. "How can you be so sick? I thought the henshin were immortal."

"Perhaps I am," Toshi said. He squeezed Bushiken's hand and opened his eyes with a faint grin. "Perhaps everything you have heard about me is true, and this is all a ruse. Wouldn't that be strange, if that were true? If I really were as immortal as they say? I would be as a god."

The old monk closed his eyes. His grip went limp. Bushiken rose, knees shaking. He felt something ancient and powerful rise through the room and through him. He felt dizzy. For a moment, he felt as if he were looking upon himself from miles away. From centuries away.

Then the door opened behind him and a servant peered into the room.

"Lord Bushiken-sama, please come with me," the little man said. "We must begin making immediate arrangements for your predecessor's remains. Shall I show you to your new quarters?"

Bushiken turned, eyes wide, and stared at the servant. "What did you call me?"

"You are the lord of Kyuden Asako now; it is my honor to call you whatever you wish," the servant replied with a quick bow. "Now please, Lord Bushiken-sama. Follow me."

The Phoenix Families: Philosophy and Theology

Though every Clan has contributed to the art of magic in their own way, the Phoenix Clan remain the unrivaled masters of the mystic arts. Some would say that if it were not for the Phoenix there would be no magic – or, at the very least, not as the people of Rokugan recognize it.

With very rare exceptions, the gift of magic follows distinct bloodlines. Even after their decimation on the Second Day of Thunder, the Phoenix Clan counts an extraordinarily large number of mystical bloodlines within their Clan. Their closest competitor, the Lion Clan, have a little less than half as many shugenja even though they have more than triple the Phoenix Clan's overall population.

Some of this phenomenon is intentional. Phoenix sensei are adept at sensing and nurturing mystical talent. Phoenix courtiers are always eager to arrange marriage with a talented young shugenja from outside the Clan, claiming him as a Phoenix. Even this, however, cannot explain why there is so much magic in the Phoenix lands.

The Phoenix do not question their good fortune. Rather, they embrace it. Every Phoenix settlement has at least one temple or small shugenja dojo. Each Family within the Clan has distinctly unique methods of magical training and education. Each Family approaches magic with a unique philosophy, built upon generations of experience. Even the Shiba Family, who produce few shugenja, is well educated in the mystic arts. They may be unable to practice magic, but rare is the Shiba samurai who does not understand the supernatural.

While there has been a history of competition between the Family shugenja Schools, the Families never lose sight of what is best for the Clan. They are quick not only to share their expertise with one another but – more importantly – to respect what the others have to say.

This balance between competition and cooperation is exactly why the Phoenix Clan's mystical mastery is superior to that of all other Clans. Most other Clans boast a single Family of shugenja, and thus they have only a single perspective on supernatural matters. The Phoenix Clan has four Families, each with different experiences and approaches. Even when faced with an unprecedented mystical phenomenon, it is very rare that the Phoenix cannot quickly find an effective response by sharing their knowledge with one another.

In fact, one can argue that understanding each Family's unique approach to magic is the first step in understanding the Phoenix Clan itself.

The Agasha

Though their membership in the Phoenix Clan has been relatively brief, the Agasha Family's history has been marked by controversy. Though they have proven their loyalty to the Phoenix Clan time and again, in many ways their Dragon Clan heritage is readily apparent. One of the clearest examples of this is their approach to magic.

The Agasha Family has an extremely clinical approach. They view magic as a system of rules that can be understood and manipulated. They approach mysticism as if it were a science, and have no reservations about combining spells with alchemy or other scientific principles to produce a greater effect.

At first this philosophy did not sit well with the other Phoenix Families. The Isawa, in particular, were outraged. For the Agasha to treat the kami like merely another ingredient in some complex magical stew seemed blasphemous. The Asako, however, were intrigued. Agasha al-

chemy was, in many ways, very similar to the henshin approach. While the Asako immortals used riddles to manipulate the environment, the Agasha used science.

From the Agasha perspective, all magic is essentially a plea to the kami to produce an effect in the physical world. By offering human aid in the form of an alchemical reaction, the kami are able to respond to such pleas much more efficiently. In a way, they had come to the same end as the henshin, albeit from very different paths. And so the Asako urged the Isawa to give their new cousins a chance to demonstrate their technique.

A series of magical demonstrations for the Elemental Masters proved that the kami appreciated alchemical aid. Agasha explosives produced great enthusiasm in Fire kami. Water kami found great joy in the changes Agasha chemicals wrought in ordinary matter. Air kami, with their natural curiosity, were quite enthusiastic about any sort of Agasha trickery. Earth kami, meanwhile, appreciated any effort to end their service quickly so that they could return to their endless meditation.

The Agasha view their alchemy as merely another form of magic, so they approach it with as much respect as would a conventional shugenja. Their alchemical libraries are consecrated, if unorthodox, temples. Their bundles of explosives and flasks of unstable chemicals are considered sacred artifacts, marked with symbols of the kami. The Agasha do not share their secrets lightly. They are extremely careful about allowing their creations to fall into the wrong hands, lest someone unravel them and glean their secrets.

This secrecy is not due to greed or jealousy. Rather, it stems from a sense of responsibility. It is the Agasha Family's firm belief that the abuse of alchemical principles could cause widespread destruction and deep imbalance within the Elements. Alchemy is a powerful tool that must be handled with care and reverence for the forces that it manipulates.

But the Agasha offer more to the Phoenix Clan than explosives and chemicals. They have also stepped forward as arbiters of the law. Daimyo Agasha Chieh's exploits as an Emerald Magistrate have led many other Agasha to follow her example. As a result, the Agasha have developed a unique expertise in Imperial Law in its relation to magic.

The landmark example of this expertise occurred only three years ago, when a young Emerald Magistrate by the name of Agasha Hana was dispatched to investigate a

murder in a small Crane village. An Otomo shugenja slew a young Crane samurai in a dispute and took refuge in an Asahina temple. The Otomo made the argument that his actions were righteous – and that if they had not been so that the kami would have never aided him in the attack. Any attempt to punish him under Imperial Law would therefore defy the kami's wishes.

It was an obvious dodge and Hana knew it to be so – most kami have very little comprehension of the mortal world and rely on shugenja to guide them. Human morality is completely irrelevant to a spirit. That didn't make the situation any easier – the Otomo was an influential man and the local Asahina authorities took his claims very seriously. To ignore the crime would set a disturbing precedent. So she quickly returned to Phoenix lands to confer with her Family.

Hana returned with an unusual solution: The Otomo had confessed to the crime, so judgment was necessary. All that remained was to determine what form that judgment would take. She offered him a placard bearing the kanji for "murderer" and informed him that he must spend the evening in the tombs of the Asahina temple, wearing the placard, surrounded by the remains of the dead Crane's relatives. Alternately, he could surrender himself to her and submit to the workings of Imperial Law.

The Otomo chose the latter.

Since that day, the Agasha Family has quickly earned a reputation for resolving unconventional disputes involving magic and Imperial Law. Even the Jade Champion has been known to draw upon their advice.

The Isawa

For the Isawa, magic is more than a path to power. It is also more than religion. Magic is everything. Those who possess the ability to use magic are truly blessed, for they can understand the true workings of the universe in a way that those born without it never can. The Isawa possess a mastery of magic beyond any other in the Empire.

But the Isawa believe that their gifts carry an obligation. Those who cannot call upon magic (or even those who are not quite as talented as they are) are, in a way, blind men in a world of light. Thus it is the Isawa's duty to guide their less fortunate brothers, so that they do not harm or offend the spirits through their ignorance. An Isawa is typically quick to take the lead in any matters regarding magic, usually disregarding the advice of others.

While this has caused many to perceive the Isawa Family as arrogant or prideful, the Isawa do not care. Their duty exists – and if others cannot perceive their superiority then that is merely another aspect of their blindness. The Phoenix Clan boasts more than twice as many shugenja bloodlines as any other Clan. The Isawa also boast twice as many shugenja bloodlines as any other Phoenix Family. Over two-thirds of the Elemental Masters throughout history have hailed from their Family. Their superiority is a simple, inarguable fact, and to argue the matter simply wastes time.

The exceptions to the Isawa's condescension (if one may call it that) are, of course the other Phoenix Families. The Isawa respect the Agasha and Asako as peers, if not equals, and have come to value the Shiba Family's mundane approach to magical matters.

The pursuit of knowledge is of great importance to the Isawa, but so is secrecy. The Isawa are extremely cautious in sharing any sort of knowledge, especially magical

knowledge. They were, after all, entrusted by Shiba and the first Emperor to be the protectors of knowledge and they do not treat that duty lightly. The Isawa are entrusted with maintaining the secrets of Phoenix magic. They maintain a rigid, five-tiered system of secrecy (see sidebar), in which each of the Clan's spells are classified by the degree of confidentiality with which it should be treated.

The Isawa respect the magic of other Clans as well, and will readily apply their system of secrecy to another Family's magic. After all, if the other Clans cannot be allowed their secrets, they cannot fulfill their unique duties. So, for example, if an outsider steals a Kuni secret spell, an Isawa will view the act as a grave insult to all shugenja. He will gladly offer assistance in seeking justice if the Kuni requires it.

While the Isawa thirst for knowledge has sometimes overruled this system of respect and led the occasional shugenja to steal secrets from another Clan, these incidents are the exception, not the rule.



The Asako

While the Asako Family is predominantly monks, they nonetheless boast an unusually large number of shugenja. A large number of Asako walk both paths, combining the martial Kiho and philosophy of a monk with the theology of a shugenja. Though there are numerous shugenja temples throughout the Asako lands, these minor schools are typically instructed by Isawa shugenja, or by Asako

Secret Spells of the Isawa

The Isawa Family stand as guardians of the Phoenix's magical secrets. They take this responsibility very seriously. They maintain a five-tiered classification system that determines how closely they keep every bit of the Clan's magical knowledge.

Fifth Tier spells are common. They may be freely shared and taught to any who can learn them. Most spells fall in this category.

Fourth Tier spells are carefully regulated, but not protected. These spells are frequently offered as gifts to trusted members of other Clans. The Isawa keep concise lists of every individual who has been gifted with these spells and monitor how they use them. If a recipient of a Fourth Tier spell shares it with someone else outside of his own Clan without permission, the Isawa view it as an insult, as the Phoenix use such gifts to gauge the loyalty of their allies. Any spell given as a gift by a member of the Phoenix Clan falls into this category, if not into one of the higher tiers.

Third Tier spells are closely guarded secrets of the Clan. These sacred rituals are only shared with outsiders in extremely rare circumstances. Those rare few given such a gift will be expected to respect the Clan's trust under all circumstances. For outsiders to practice them without permission is a grave insult, akin to desecrating a Phoenix temple. Such an insult will result in swift retribution unless all scrolls are returned and a sincere apology is given. Even a perfect formal apology may not be enough, however as the Isawa are not typically forgiving of this sort of thing.

Any spells specifically labeled as a specialty of the Phoenix Clan fall into this category.

Second Tier spells are the province of specific Families, but are otherwise treated the same as Third Tier spells. The Isawa jealously protect their Family

spells even from the Agasha and Asako, for only by maintaining the purity of their magical technique can each Family serve its purpose.

Any spell specifically labeled as a specialty of a Phoenix Family falls into this category.

First Tier spells are the most closely guarded secrets of the Phoenix Clan. They are known only by the Elemental Masters and a handful of their trusted servants. These spells are often extremely powerful – but not always. Some are simply tailored to specific situations (like banishing a known oni or bypassing the wards of a specific temple).

To be granted such a spell is a sign of the Council's ultimate faith. They are only given to non-Phoenix in extremely rare cases, and usually on the condition that they will be returned when no longer needed. For example, prior to the battle on the Day of Thunder, it is rumored that Isawa Tadaka offered one of his secret spells to Kuni Utagu, which Utagu returned to the surviving Masters once Fu Leng was defeated.

For a non-Master to share one of these spells under any circumstances is the ultimate betrayal of the Phoenix Clan, tantamount to an act of war.

Five new First Tier spells are introduced in this chapter.

monks who trained at the Isawa Academy, and are thus an extension of the Isawa School.

This is not to say that the Asako do not possess a deep understanding of magic. They understand magic thoroughly; they simply do not follow the Isawa Family's regimented approach to it. For the Asako, magic is merely another form of knowledge. While all pursuit of knowledge is valuable on the path to Enlightenment, magic is no more or less valuable than any other. This makes the Asako a great deal more approachable than the other shugenja Families, and it has caused them to welcome their current role as the Clan's public face in the Imperial Court.

This relaxed attitude sometimes draws contempt from their Isawa brethren, who view magic as the gift that sets them apart from normal mortals. From an Isawa perspective, the Asako do not take their study of magic seriously at all. From an Asako perspective, the Isawa are too narrow-minded, closing their eyes to the physical world.

While these differing philosophies have led to many disputes between the two houses, they have ultimately forged a bond between the Isawa and Asako that few outsiders (even within the Clan) will ever understand. The Isawa have deep respect for the Asako Family's wisdom and versatility. The Asako value the Isawa for vast intellect. While they will frequently squabble over trivial matters, they heed one another's expertise or, at worst, agree to disagree on items of true importance.

The Asako henshin represent a complicated wrinkle within the complex politics of the Clan. While they are not technically shugenja, the secrets bequeathed to them by Isawa have rewarded them with a supernatural understanding of the cosmos. While their ability to "riddle" kami suggests a power akin to magic, the henshin typically do not possess a formal understanding of magic. So, while their advice is often valuable in supernatural matters, their ability to help is often limited.

For example, a henshin might be able to instantly sense a disturbance in the natural balance and know that a kami requires aid. However, he cannot communicate with the spirits in a direct manner, as a shugenja can.

The Shiba

The Shiba Family has the most difficult role to play within the Phoenix Clan. Of all the Families, they have the fewest magical bloodlines. The Shiba's proportion of shugenja to non-shugenja is only slightly higher than a typical bushi Family, and even that is due only to intermarriage with the other Phoenix Families. The Shiba technically rule the Phoenix Clan, but in practical terms the Council of Masters overshadows their authority. Outsiders often wonder how a Family with such little power can possibly claim to rule. Those who would claim such things fail to understand the Phoenix.

The Phoenix may be the masters of magic, but they still live in a world of violent mortals. Much like a yojimbo serves and protects his lord, the Shiba shield the other Families from the world. While the Asako, Agasha, and Isawa occupy themselves with matters of supernatural import, the Shiba remain firmly grounded in mundane reality. They patrol the roads. They organize and lead the armies. They make the laws. They build schools and temples so that the other Families can dedicate their time to the mysteries of the universe.

This doesn't mean that the Shiba avoid magic altogether. For instance, the Clan's use of magic in war is always

organized and decreed at the highest level by the Phoenix Clan Champion. If the Shiba armies require the mobility or support that only magic can provide, then it falls to the other Families to obey his commands. Only the Elemental Council has the authority to override or ignore such an edict – and they generally do not. Just as the Champion respects their authority in matters of magic, so do the Council respect the Champion's wisdom in time of war.

At least, that is how it works in theory. Pride and honor can interfere, and sometimes they do interfere. In times of war, what matters most: a samurai's duty to his lord or a shugenja's duty to the spirits? The Celestial Order decrees that the kami stand above mortals, but when one's Family and life are threatened, the needs of an intangible spirit can seem unimportant.

Clashes between the Champion and Council are not uncommon, as the Clan's worldly needs are often at odds with its spiritual goals. To the Phoenix Clan, this is to be expected. It is, in fact, the reason why Champion and Masters are separate institutions. The Phoenix is a Clan that lives in two worlds, and it is of critical importance that the Clan's needs in both worlds are satisfied. A Champion who cannot set aside his ego and obey the Masters is a poor Champion indeed. A Master who cannot humbly heed his Champion's advice will likewise serve the Clan poorly.

Religion and the Life of a Phoenix

For the Phoenix Clan, reverence of the kami is ingrained in every part of their daily life. Phoenix farmers sing songs to Kuroshin, Fortune of Agriculture, as they work. Phoenix bushi almost invariably carry a small figurine of Bishamon or another patron kami to guide their weapon. Rare is the classroom that does not bear at least one painting or sculpture of Shinsei in honor of his wisdom.

Religion is reflected in so many aspects of their daily life that many Phoenix do not fully grasp the piety of their Clan until they visit the lands of other Clans. This can often be a shock, and lead many Phoenix to believe that outsiders are impious or ungrateful toward Shinsei and the kami. More even-tempered Phoenix have learned to take other Rokugani's more casual approach to religion in stride.

Festivals

THE PHOENIX ROAD FESTIVAL

This curious Phoenix tradition is not so much a single festival as it is a collection of ancient Phoenix traditions. While it is common for every Rokugani village to hold its own local festivals and celebrations, this custom is even more exaggerated and prevalent in Phoenix lands. It seems almost as if every day there is a celebration somewhere.

In the Third Century, a small order of monks dedicated to Ebisu, Fortune of Work, began an annual pilgrimage between the Phoenix villages, adding their prayers and wisdom to the peasant celebrations. As the years passed, the monks became quite familiar with the local schedule of village festivals, and had refined their schedule so that they could travel from festival to festival with very little downtime between them.

The famous ronin poet Botan first met this order of monks in 467. He followed their pilgrimage for three years, though admittedly he was more attracted to the festivals for the lure of song, drink, and women than due to any particular devotion to the Fortunes. In the wake of his adventures he published a book entitled *The Phoenix Road*, which details some of the more interesting festivals and the route one must travel to attend them all. Botan's work became quite popular in the courts. Tourism in Phoenix lands increased dramatically.

In the centuries since Botan's life, the original book has become sadly outdated. Many new festivals have been introduced while others are no longer practiced. And, of course, some of the villages Botan visited no longer exist. The Seppun Family, who have long respected the Phoenix Clan's religious traditions, have done their best to update the information.

The best time of the year to follow the Phoenix Road, traditionally, is the Month of the Tiger through the Month of the Horse. During this period not only is the weather relatively fair, but one can trace a route from Shiro Shiba (for their legendary New Year's Festival) south and west along the road, stopping frequently, only to arrive at Honored Treaty City in time for the Chrysanthemum Festival. During the entire journey (slightly more than three months) a traveler will not spend longer than three days outside of a festival of some sort.

Every year a new volume of the Phoenix Road is produced, whereupon it circulates through the winter courts. This book is quite popular with holy pilgrims seeking to learn more about Phoenix culture, as well as with adventurous young bushi eager to prove themselves by traveling the Empire. Youths will occasionally conspire to journey the Phoenix Road in the guise of a *musha shugyo*, when in reality they simply intend to enjoy months of debauchery. For Phoenix samurai, however, abusing festivals in such a way is deeply frowned upon, even sacrilegious. For other Clans (particularly the Crab) journeying the Phoenix Road is encouraged in hopes that the youths will return with interesting stories.

THE NEW YEAR

Toshi no Ichi and Oshogatsu (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, respectively) are two of the most commonly celebrated festivals throughout the Empire. However, these two festivals have a special deep significance in the lands of the Phoenix.

Toshi no Ichi is customarily the day when holy temples are emptied, purified, and sanctified. Traditionally, when the purification is complete the attendant monk or *shugenja* will ring a bell 49 times to honor the Seven Fortunes in both their benevolent and wrathful aspects. Due to the sheer number of temples and holy sites throughout Phoenix territory, the sheer acoustic power of this rite is incredible. The tolling of innumerable bells, large and small, can be heard even by ships passing along the coastline. It is said that any oni unfortunate to be in Phoenix lands during the Toshi no Ichi chorus must bind his ears tightly or perish from the sacred sound.

Oshogatsu is also quite extraordinary in the Phoenix lands. New Year's Day is a symbol of rebirth, an idea that is quite close to the hearts of many Phoenix. On New Year's Eve, the Phoenix celebrate the cycle of rebirth and frequently dress as favored ancestors to honor them. This culture was particularly popular in the Shiba lands, until several years ago.

After Shiba Tsukune's ascendance in 1159, New Year's celebrations in Shiba lands became a great deal more somber. Dressing as one's ancestors was seen as bad taste, as it reminded the Shiba that the loss of their ancestral sword had resulted in the Soul of Shiba's permanent loss as well. For ten years, Oshogatsu was a day of mourning for the Shiba.

With the Soul of Shiba's return, Champion Shiba Tsukimi has attempted to reinstate former traditions of celebration on Oshogatsu. These attempts have met with resistance, as some pessimistic Phoenix fear that the Soul has not permanently returned. Only time, and the Champion's persistence, will tell if her efforts will be successful.

Superstitions

While the Phoenix have always been among the most superstitious people in Rokugan by popular reputation, they do not see themselves so. By definition, a superstition is an irrational practice developed in reaction to fear of the unknown – and a Phoenix, in his own view, is never irrational. If a Phoenix slashes at the trees with a sprig of pine to scare away ghosts it isn't because he's a fool. It's because there really *are* ghosts in the Isawa woodlands and he knows it's probably a bad idea to wander into their home unannounced.

Ironically, many Phoenix view the other Clans' superstitions as naïve and foolish. However, it is rare that they will ever say so. The Phoenix believe that to mock a superstition is terribly bad luck – and will likely result in a disgruntled spirit forcing the superstition to come true.

Similarly, all of the Phoenix Clan's other superstitions are firmly founded in the Clan's mystical tradition. Even a Phoenix with no magical ability recognizes that it's better to stay on a kami's good side. By throwing some rice on the road

or carrying a small effigy of a Fortune, even those with no ability to speak to the spirits can communicate their good will.

The Asako historians have dedicated a small library to the collection of Phoenix superstitions, and have recently begun dispatching scholars to document the superstitions of other Clans as well. The library is currently off limit to all but trusted members of the Phoenix (mostly, its political leadership and senior scholars), as sharing knowledge of such sacred practices will almost certainly invite bad luck upon the Clan.

The Tao and Enlightenment

The Phoenix Clan was instrumental in the transcription of Shinsei's teachings, as well as their spread throughout the Empire. Though worship of the Fortunes and Shinsei's teachings are two completely different modes of worship, the Phoenix will be the first to stress that they are not mutually exclusive.

Worship of the Fortunes is the truest path to understanding the forces that shape the universe and being at peace with the spirits. Understanding the Tao is the truest path to understanding oneself – and finding Enlightenment. To truly understand the universe and one's place in it, a Phoenix must master Fortunism and Shinseism.



THE BOOK OF THE SOUL

The third book of the Tao – the *Book of the Soul* – exists to smooth over the irregularities between the two modes of worship and allow them to exist side by side. This book is unique among the three books of the original Tao in that it was not directly transcribed from Shinsei's teachings. Instead, the *Book of the Soul* is a collection of second-hand observations of Shinsei's life, along with a deeper analysis of the Tao in its relation to the kami and Fortunes. It is no coincidence that this book was written by Phoenix scholars.

A few outspoken Isawa scholars hold the belief that the *Book of the Soul* is their Clan's single greatest contribution to the Empire. Though the Phoenix have produced many great heroes, holy men, artists, and statesmen throughout history, this argument is difficult to ignore. In their chosen role as the keepers of knowledge and the stewards of Rokugani faith, the *Book of the Soul* certainly stands as the Clan's most remarkable contribution.

With this single volume, what could have grown into a dangerous religious schism for a budding Empire was instead transformed into the foundation of a faith that has survived virtually unchanged for over eleven centuries.

THE ELEMENTAL KEEPERS

Enlightenment is a delicate subject for the Phoenix. Much of the Clan holds to a rigid belief that Enlightenment is impossible unless one is completely in harmony with the universe – a state that is nearly impossible to obtain in a single mortal life. Shinsei was an exception, and because of that, he was extraordinary.

By these standards, the recently appointed Keepers of the Five Rings cannot possibly be Enlightened. While all of them are exemplary individuals, their flaws and excesses do not meet any rational standard of Enlightenment. These same Phoenix would even argue that the entire quest for the Elemental Books was deeply flawed – for anyone who truly valued Enlightenment would have neither accepted



the books or accepted a shallow title. For the more orthodox members of the Phoenix, the existence of the Keepers not only demeans the entire concept of Enlightenment, but shames Shinsei's memory as well.

Whether or not the fact that none of the current Keepers are members of the Phoenix Clan has affected this philosophy is difficult to say.

The Spirit Realms

The mortal realm occasionally comes "close" to various Spirit Realms, allowing transit between the two. This is unusually common in Phoenix Clan territory. Even realms that usually do not normally touch the mortal realm have done so in Phoenix lands. Passages to Jigoku were not uncommon during the Clan War. Even rare passages to Tengoku, allowing the Fire Dragon and lesser dragons to descend from the Celestial Heavens, have existed temporarily in Phoenix territory.

Is the land's closeness to the Spirit Realms a result of the Phoenix Clan's dabbling in magic? Or is the Clan's skill at magic a result of their closeness to the spirits? The Isawa support both theories. They claim that their Clan's predecessors, the Children of the Earth, chose these lands due to Mori Isawa's deep spiritual connections. Over many generations, they used their own magic to cultivate and intensify these connections, forever transforming the Phoenix provinces into a land that seethes with spiritual energy.

Fushicho

When Shiba originally chose the symbol of his Clan, he chose the houou, the immortal firebirds that served as his mother's guardians and messengers. These true phoenixes were rarely ever seen in the mortal world, and they are said to have vanished altogether following Amaterasu's death. The fushicho are their lesser cousins, the offspring of true phoenix who stayed too long in the mortal realm and were corrupted by mortality.

These shapeshifters can take mortal form and have been known to occasionally visit Rokugan, usually on behalf of a Fortune or on some other celestial mission. These individuals usually masquerade as Phoenix samurai, either from some feeling of brotherhood or a deep sense of irony.

Unlike most shapeshifters, fushicho are extremely serious and courageous. More than one fushicho has gladly sacrificed itself for the sake of its mortal allies. The Phoenix

Clan has an unspoken policy to aid any fushicho they discover, even if they pretend to be a Phoenix. As these beings are invariably emissaries of the Celestial Heavens, to question their actions would be extremely improper if not blasphemous.

For more information on fushicho, see *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*, p. 103.

Yuki no Onna

Of all the spirits that wander Mori Isawa, none are as famous as the Snow Maidens. With a single exception in Rokugan's history, these beautiful spirits are only seen in Phoenix territory. They wander the woodlands during deep winter; occasionally helping lost travelers and sometimes leading them to their doom. Rare is the Phoenix village that doesn't have at least one legend about a kindly (or wrathful) Yuki no Onna. Their motives are as mysterious as their origins.

Most Phoenix peasants insist that it's best to be polite to a Snow Maiden, and take your leave quickly. If you meet a kindly one, she may offer you her blessings – but it's best not to waste her time. If you meet a wicked one, perhaps you can politely escape before you incite her wrath.

The Snow Maidens are in many ways the living embodiment of winter in the Phoenix lands – a beautiful, natural part of existence. And, like the winter, only a fool would dare stand against them.

For more information on Yuki no Onna, see *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*, p. 185.

Temple of the Phoenix Lands

Phoenix territory has been blessed with abundant natural resources, granting them extraordinary wealth. They have returned a generous share of that wealth to the kami and Fortunes. Even the smallest village boasts at least one temple. Any decent-sized city houses a Phoenix shugenja school. Roadside shrines are extremely common. Smaller shrines paying tribute to nature spirits can be found at every large waterfall, forest, or mountain.

While to say the Phoenix are proud of their piety would be incorrect – the Fortunes frown upon excessive pride – one could easily say the Phoenix are very public in their devotion and have ample means to demonstrate it.

The Isawa Schools

The Isawa Family is easily the most respected masters of magic and mysticism in Rokugan. Shugenja of every Clan hope for a chance to train among the Isawa masters. Even those students of other Schools envy the Isawa Family's magical acumen, and often visit the Phoenix Clan in hopes of discussing theology and magical theory. This, combined with the Family's already unusually large number of shugenja bloodlines, means that the Isawa School is a great deal larger than any other shugenja School in the Empire.

In fact, to assume that the Isawa School is a single institution is incorrect. In the year 435, the Isawa recognized that their student population was quickly outgrowing the facilities at Kyuden Isawa. While Phoenix Champion Shiba Toshiken was perfectly willing to expand the castle, Isawa Tokiuiji, then Master of the Void, had a better solution. Rather than expand the castle, he would expand the School – across all the lands of the Phoenix.

Or, rather, the idea of the School.

Tokiuiji carefully selected five of his most talented instructors. He requested that his fellow Masters do the same. These 25 sensei, five talented shugenja for each Element, were dispatched to various towns and villages throughout the Clan's territory. Each of them was granted the title of adept. Wherever these adepts chose to teach their art became an official extension of the Isawa School.

Only extremely promising students (or students from very influential Families) receive their training at Kyuden Isawa itself. Once a year, the latest batch of students prepare for their gempukku journey to the original Isawa School so that they may undertake their final tests before the Council of Masters. The rest of the time, the vast majority of Isawa students never even visit the original home of their techniques.

For a short time after the Clan War, this custom was discontinued. The Phoenix were so reduced in number by the events leading to the Day of Thunder that they simply did not have enough students to spread between 25 satellite schools. Some might even go so far as to say that they hardly had 25 teachers qualified to serve as adepts at the time.)

However, this was a relatively minor setback. Following the Day of Thunder, Champion Shiba Tsukune opened her Clan to just about any shugenja seeking fealty. Naka Kuro, Grand Master of the Elements, was one of the first to accept. Between Tsukune's charismatic recruitment

and Kuro's skilled instruction, the Phoenix Clan had assembled the 25 Adepts within a single generation.

It took a long time for the Phoenix to recover from the damage that the Clan War inflicted and even with aggressive recruiting to rebuild their ranks, it was still hard to justify staffing the Isawa School faculty at its former levels. But Kuro insisted upon a return to the old ways. The Phoenix Clan is an extremely traditional Clan, and a return to the old ways was an important boost to morale during that dark period in their history. Kuro is still revered for his extraordinary service to the Clan, and portraits of him adorn the walls of every true Isawa school, usually placed next to the customary painting of Shinsei.

In upholding the Clan's tradition, Kuro discovered a remarkable thing that the Isawa had long taken for granted. By spreading its students throughout the land, the various Adepts were free to customize their instruction without fear of being corrected by the Masters. This caused many distinct styles and approaches to magic to develop within the same school. When the many students of the different adepts combined their knowledge at Kyuden Isawa, the best parts of every teacher's technique slowly disseminated throughout the Clan. By balancing freedom of thought with rigid instruction and tradition, the Phoenix's talents with magic became greater than that of other Clans.

It is a lesson the Elemental Masters prize to this day. Promotion to adept is one of the greatest honors an Elemental Master can bestow upon a shugenja. Such a promotion shows that the Council not only trusts the adept's mastery of the Elements, but also trusts the adept to shape the Clan's very future.

There are exceptions to this rule, of course. The Isawa Tensai embrace a single Element in a manner so pure that only the Elemental Masters themselves can guide their instruction. The Agasha Family maintains their own small School separate from Isawa instruction. The Asako Family, of course, sends most of their shugenja to train at the Isawa School.

Temple of Brilliant Rebirth

This temple stands in the foothills near Shiro Shiba. A relatively new temple, Brilliant Rebirth Temple was constructed only a few decades ago. Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukune constructed it shortly after the Day of Thunder. Originally intended as temporary housing for the many peasants left homeless during Yogo Junzo's attack on Phoenix lands, the structure was constructed using discarded rubble and materials from ruined homes.



As the structure took form, its beauty struck Tsukune. The peasants had not merely constructed a serviceable home for themselves; they had built a castle, surrounded by a walled village. At first, this was a matter of practical necessity. In the dark days following the Clan War, many bandits and Shadowlands beasts prowled the depopulated lands of the Phoenix, and it would have been foolish to build such an important structure without fortifications. Tsukune applauded the talent and ingenuity of her workers, and immediately arranged for higher quality materials to be imported from the Crane lands.

The peasants politely declined their Mistress's request, however, asking that she instead use the Crane supplies to repair Shiro Shiba. They continued to construct the growing temple from the shattered ruins of Phoenix buildings destroyed during the Clan War.

When the work was done, the results were stunning. The peasants dedicated their work to their beloved Champion, who in turn dedicated it to the many brave Phoenix – samurai and peasant alike – who died to redeem their Clan on the Second Day of Thunder. The main building

was named the Temple of Brilliant Rebirth, and the surrounding village likewise became Brilliant Rebirth Village. Both the temple and the village have come to represent the Phoenix Clan's cycle of destruction, redemption and rebirth – and the Shiba Family's indomitable spirit in particular.

In recent years, the monks and peasants who tend the temple have built numerous small shrines within it. Each shrine is dedicated to a past Phoenix Clan Champion and contains, at the very least, a small portrait and a written account of the Champion's life. The two largest shrines are dedicated to Shiba himself and to Tsukune, now ascendant as Fortune of Rebirth.

Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukimi has taken a particular interest in these shrines. She has donated many Family relics to the temple, each placed in the shrine dedicated to its original owner. She has likewise dispatched many Phoenix samurai on missions throughout the Empire, seeking items that once belonged to past Phoenix Champions so that they may be enshrined at the temple.

Tsukimi has stated that the Soul of Shiba is aware of the temple's existence, and that the past Phoenix Champi-

ons are deeply honored by its existence. She claims that she can hear her ancestors' voices more clearly when she meditates upon their shrines, and that their guidance has been of great value during her time as ruler of the Phoenix Clan. Tsukimi believes that making the spirits more comfortable within their temple is the least she can do to repay their guidance.

Uikku's Shrine and Prophet Plain

The tale of the prophet Uikku is a tragic one. He was discovered as a small child, wandering lost on the Phoenix Plains. After taking him to shelter, the peasants were startled to see his green-gold eyes and hear his strange, resonant voice. They immediately sent for the Isawa, who were equally astounded. Though the strange boy was barely aware of his own surroundings, he could quote entire sections of the Tao from memory.

Even for a shugenja, such an accomplishment would have been astounding for the Tao was not well known in that time. For a peasant, it was simply impossible. The Isawa declared the boy a "serene prophet" and brought him to Kyuden Isawa where his wisdom could be nurtured and protected. In time, he was given the Isawa name.

Over time, however, the boy's unusual mental condition also grew worse. He fell into fits and spasms. Where once he spoke only of Shinsei's blessings, he now uttered dark ramblings about the future. The Isawa transcribed his words carefully. Some of his prophecies outlined a course of events that led to the destruction of all Rokugan – known collectively as the Eight Dooms. The prophet died shortly after the Eighth Doom was recorded.

To commemorate the serene prophet's wisdom (and perhaps to appease the dark spirits that drove the boy mad) the Phoenix constructed a shrine to his memory on Yogensha Heigen – the Prophet Plain.

A small order of Shiba Bushi known as the Defenders of Uikku once dedicated themselves to preventing the Eight Dooms. Most of the order, tragically, died on the Day of Thunder. Of the handful that remained, several retired to Yogensha Heigen to serve as an honor guard for the serene prophet's memorial. A band of Asako monks accompanied them and helped them build a monastery there. Their only visitors were the rare pilgrim or a rare Shiba bushi eager to learn the brotherhood's unconventional techniques.



And so for decades, very little of interest happened at Yogensha Heigen. Though war and strife washed over the Phoenix lands, the prophet's shrine remained undisturbed. All of this changed two years ago, when a lost child stumbled out of the rain into the monastery courtyard.

The little girl seemed confused and lost. She trembled from the cold rain and mumbled constantly in a strange, indecipherable tongue. The monks and bushi quickly brought her inside. It was not long before they noticed her strange, green-gold eyes.

The child soon recovered from her illness, but by all appearances, her mind never became whole again. She began telling strange, fragmented tales of the past – horrible, violent tales where the Empire's greatest heroes had become corrupted or died ignobly. She told tales of Fu Leng's victory on the Day of Thunder and his savage rule over a fallen Empire. She whispered legends of a thousand years of darkness. The monks realized to their horror that this was not mere gibberish. This mad girl, whom they named Rei, spoke of a world where Uikku's prophecies had come true.

The Asako monks chose to do what their family has always done – they began recording history.

The libraries of the Uikku monastery have quickly filled with hastily written scrolls. Rei only ceases telling tales of her strange, doomed Rokugan when her voice grows hoarse – and as soon as it heals she begins babbling again.

The Asako record her nightmares dutifully.

Gisei Toshi

The legendary Hidden City is the oldest and most magical city in all of Rokugan. It was here that Isawa and the Children of the Earth lived before joining the Phoenix. It was here that Isawa's Last Wish and many other legendary spells and mystical artifacts were once created. It could be rightly said that Gisei Toshi is the birthplace of the Phoenix Clan as we know it today.

Most of the Empire is unaware of Gisei Toshi's existence. Early in the Empire's history, Gisei Toshi was believed destroyed. The Phoenix secretly rebuilt the city, dedicating it to the research of magic and the storage of dangerous magical artifacts that could not be safely destroyed. Then, the city was again discovered by Iuchiban and nearly destroyed a second time. In a dramatic display of power, Shiba Aikune apparently used Isawa's Last Wish to destroy the city. In truth, he had simply moved

Gisei Toshi deeper into the mountains, secure now that the Empire once more believed it destroyed.

Even among the Phoenix, the city's existence is a well-kept secret. The city stands in a small valley deep within the mountains of Isawa territory, well hidden from outsiders. Its inhabitants are mostly self-sufficient, so what few supplies they need can easily be delivered by the Elemental Masters and their most trusted servants.

The valley is wrapped in a complex mystical ward woven by the Elemental Masters – those who leave the valley without the Council's blessing soon become confused. The further one moves from the city, the more confused and disoriented they become, until they cannot possibly find Gisei Toshi again. Those who venture too far from the city do not even remember it or any of the time they spent there. The Elemental Masters are immune to this enchantment, and they can grant (or revoke) similar immunity to whomever they wish.

The citizens of Gisei Toshi are well aware of this enchantment. If any citizen of Gisei Toshi wishes to leave, the Elemental Masters will arrange an escort to lead them safely out of the mountains. They leave with the understanding that they can never return. Most of the citizens are quite happy to live in such a magical place and provide such a unique service to their Clan – even if it means they will never see beyond the confines of their tiny valley.

Within the city stands a temple dedicated to each of the Fortunes. These temples also serve as storage for many of the most dangerous artifacts in Rokugan's history. These include the Bloodsword Yashin, several Black Scrolls, the writings of Yajinden, the Doomseeker Iuchi Karasu's mask and sai, a handful of gaijin artifacts, and the recently acquired Egg of the Void.

After using the Egg of the Void to summon the Fire Dragon over Toshi Ranbo, the Council of Masters concluded that the artifact was far too dangerous to be used again. It was taken to Gisei Toshi for storage. Master of Water Asako Bairei, who has spent a great deal of time studying the Egg, is extremely interested in acquiring the many other artifacts that were salvaged from the Tomb of the Seven Thunders. Though the other artifacts were distributed throughout the Clans at the will of Emperor Toturi III and are presumably in good hands, Bairei is not so sure. The power of the Egg of the Void, for example, is more incredible than even the Masters first imagined. Each of the other artifacts may have similar powers – and

thus are a possible threat to the Empire. The only safe place that such artifacts can be stored is Gisei Toshi.

Of course, getting the other Clans to understand that will be quite difficult. Bairei knows he must move cautiously. He cannot afford to offend the bearers of the other artifacts – lest he cause the very tragedies he seeks to avoid. He cannot move too obviously, or the Phoenix Clan's enemies may wonder where he intends to store the artifacts and Gisei Toshi's existence will be exposed. He is certainly not dishonorable enough to consider stealing the treasures – at least for now. If one of the other artifacts presents a tangible threat to the Empire, the Master of Water will do everything within his power to eliminate that danger.

Another interesting recent development in the history of the Hidden City was the arrival of the Children of the Last Wish. These mythical creatures seem to be spirits of pure Void, given tangibility and awareness via unknown means. Before its destruction, these spirits were the messengers and companions of Isawa's Last Wish. These creatures were believed destroyed along with the Wish. To the Elemental Council's surprise, they recently appeared at the Hidden City, piercing the city's wards without any apparent trouble.

The Children, fortunately, appear benevolent and loyal to the Clan that created their master. They claim that they miss the Last Wish terribly, and are eager to help the Elemental Council recreate the Wish – if they desire. The Council is split on the matter. Though the Masters of Water and Void are eager to restore Isawa's greatest creation, the Masters of Fire and Earth warn that the Wish was incredibly dangerous before Shiba Aikune tamed it, and that they feel the Empire is safer without such magic. The Master of Air, Tamori Nakamuro is uncertain if he trusts the Children at all. In the meantime, the Children have been invited to remain in Gisei Toshi as long as they desire. The immortal spirits, for their part, are content to wait.

The Temple of the Golden Arm

This unassuming temple stands at the very edge of the Phoenix lands, in the Mountains of Regret, near Toshi no Omoidasu, the City of Remembrance. Though the order of the Golden Arm is relatively new, the temple is not. It stood unoccupied for hundreds of years before the Order of the Golden Arm arrived. From the looks of it, it was once a temple to Bishamon, Fortune of Strength. Dur-

ing the Gozoku period, Gozoku agents killed the warrior monks who tended the shrine. Since that time, it had lain abandoned.

Asako Bushiken first discovered the temple three years after leaving the Asako Family. At the time, he was lost and without direction. Seeing such a holy place in ruins touched something within him. Many of Bishamon's statues collapsed, with large sections left to erode or carted away by looters. Bushiken decided that he would restore the temple and make it his home.

The work was grueling, and the young monk soon realized he would require new materials if the temple was ever going to regain its former glory. He began clearing the site and offered the rubble to a mason in the nearby city, hauling loads of heavy stone to him for re-use and accepting payment only in rice and new building materials. The merchant felt somewhat guilty that he should benefit from a servant of Shinsei performing such coarse labor, but Bushiken insisted. Each morning he descended the mountain path with a cart full of broken rubble. Every night he ascended to the temple again, carrying the fresh materials he had earned that day. Bushiken knew there was more work than he could conceivably finish alone, but that did not stop him.

And so it went for some time, until Bushiken's path took a sudden turn.

On his way down to the village one morning, Bushiken came across a group of ronin harassing a peasant. The man, unfortunately, was too proud to endure their insults and abuse and spat upon their leader's boot. The leader of the wave men threw the peasant on the road and drew his sword, only to find Bushiken standing in his path. The young monk had only moments to find a weapon, and had not realized that chunk of rubble he had seized was a piece of statuary. He held the gleaming brass arm of Bishamon.

The ronin laughed at the clumsy weapon and lunged. Bushiken was quicker, and struck him across the face with Bishamon's arm, knocking him senseless with a single blow. The other ronin, startled by Bushiken's speed and strength, dragged their comrade back to their horses and fled. Bushiken escorted the farmer back to the village, where he told his story to the local magistrates.

Though Bushiken had not sought recognition, word quickly spread of his exploit. The people of Toshi no Omoidasu began calling him "Bushiken of the Golden

Arm." Some heaped praise upon him. Others sought to challenge his reputed strength. Bushiken ignored them all as he hauled his cart to and from the city.

Two weeks later, Bushiken returned home to find six men waiting for him. At first, he was concerned that the ronin had come seeking revenge. Instead, he found the proud peasant, along with his father, his brother, and his son, and two friends. The peasant introduced himself as Masamichi, and said that he and the others had come to learn from the Master of the Golden Arm.

Bushiken refused and went about his work. Still disillusioned with the world and with himself, he did not think he was worthy to teach anyone.

But when Masamichi and his companions began helping, Bushiken did not stop them. Now instead of one cart on the road each morning, there were seven. Within six months, the temple was fully restored. When Masamichi and the others begged to learn from Bushiken again, he accepted – on three conditions: They would have to learn the Tao, they must think for themselves, and they must never call him sensei. They eagerly agreed.

Asako Bushiken had never sought followers – but thus the Order of the Golden Arm was born nonetheless. Following their teacher's example, the Golden Arm monks set out to right wrongs and protect the weak in the City of Remembrance. Over the next few years, their numbers grew.

During the Rain of Blood, the city was hit particularly hard. Bushiken and his warrior monks were fearless in the face of the corrupted Mantis that pillaged the city. Rallying around Matsu Hitomi and the last few samurai defenders, the Golden Arm protected the surviving citizens until Isawa Sezar and Shiba Mirabu arrived with reinforcements.

Following the Rain, the Order concentrated on helping to rebuild the city and otherwise kept a low profile. That, of course, ended when Bushiken was suddenly proclaimed the Asako Family Daimyo. His first act was to grant fealty to Masamichi and any other Golden Arm monks who desired it. None denied Bushiken's request.



The new Asako Daimyo now uses this temple as a private retreat of sorts, a place where he can come to share his thoughts with his students and contemplate the true meaning of Enlightenment.

Temple of the Eight Guardians

The Temple of the Eight Guardians was only recently constructed, but it is already among the most glorious of the Phoenix temples. It stands in a large clearing in the Mori Isawa, just west of Kyuden Isawa itself. Following the Fire Dragon's appearance in Toshi Ranbo, the Elemental Masters ordered that this temple be constructed to celebrate the power and wisdom of the Eight Dragons. Some say that reverence was not Isawa Ochiai's true motivation for building the temple, and that it was a hasty attempt to soothe the Fire Dragon's legendary anger before it took offense at being summoned. While there is some merit to this theory, the fact that the Fire Dragon has sought no retribution may be, in some small part, due to the glory of this temple.

The name "temple" is perhaps a misnomer. The structure is actually a large, complex wall dividing eight separate temple structures in a complex pattern. Each of these temples is dedicated to one of the immortal dragons known to dwell in the Celestial Heavens.

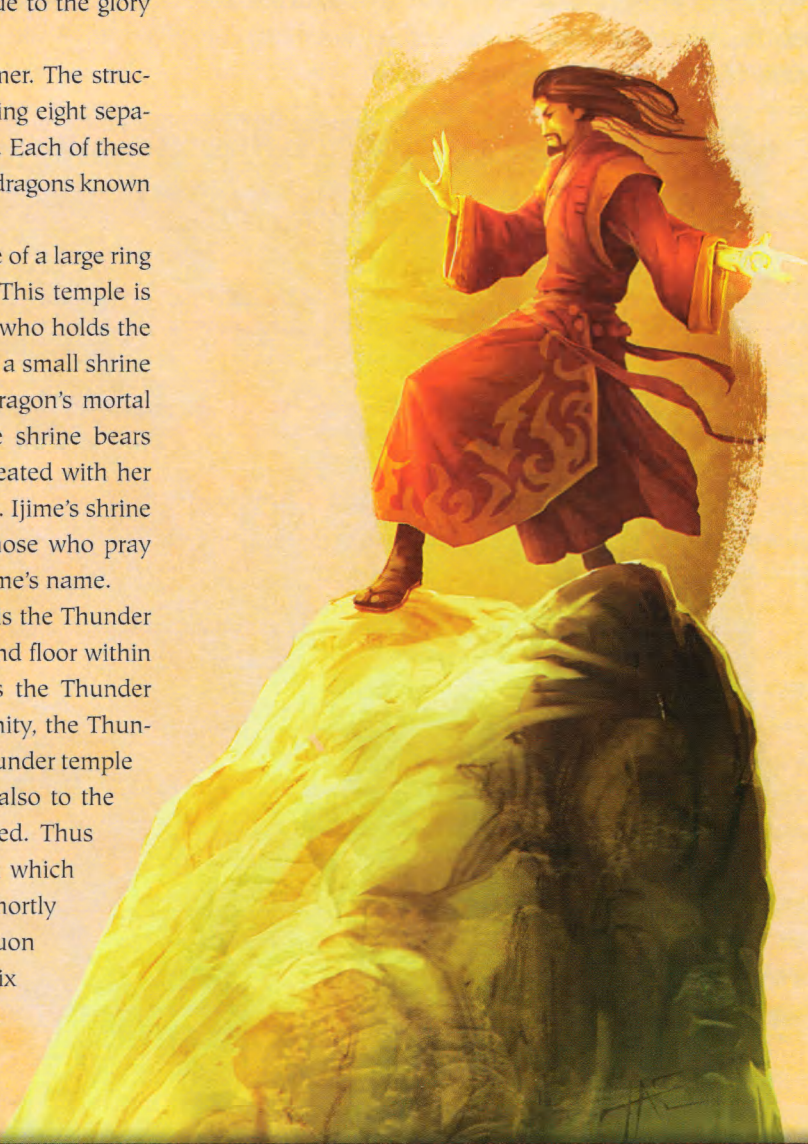
The Celestial Temple is built in the shape of a large ring and forms the outer wall of the complex. This temple is dedicated to the mighty Celestial Dragon, who holds the heavens aloft. Of particular interest here is a small shrine dedicated to Isawa Ijime, the Celestial Dragon's mortal daughter who tragically died young. The shrine bears a small flower of yellow silk that Ijime created with her magic during her training at Kyuden Isawa. Ijime's shrine is located on the northern wall, where those who pray there can clearly see the star that bears Ijime's name.

The next largest temple in the complex is the Thunder Temple. This temple forms the entire ground floor within the Celestial Temple's outer wall. Just as the Thunder Dragon has always been closest to humanity, the Thunder Temple the closest to the earth. The Thunder temple is dedicated not only to the dragon, but also to the common people that she has always loved. Thus the temple has many empty chambers in which pilgrims can stay as long as they desire. Shortly after the temple was constructed, Hida Kuon dispatched several of his artisans to Phoenix lands, where they donated a statue of Hida

Atarasi, son of the Thunder Dragon. The statue is now proudly displayed at the entrance of the temple's central prayer chamber. The remaining six temples are built on top of the Thunder Temple. The temples of Void, Earth, Fire, Water, and Air are slender spires arranged in a circle around the central Jade Temple.

The Earth Temple is constructed of a single piece of rough granite, hollowed out and sculpted by the Master of Earth, Isawa Emori. In the short time it has stood, it has become a tradition for a farmer from each village in Phoenix lands to make a pilgrimage to this temple, to deposit a handful of rice on the Earth Dragon's altar so that their crops will be plentiful. Though the monks claim that they never remove the offered rice, it invariably vanishes as soon as no one is in attendance.

The Fire Temple is constructed of shimmering red marble. Master of Fire Isawa Ochiai invoked a powerful enchantment upon the temple so that the walls always radi-



ate a steady heat. After the temple was constructed, the Shiba Family donated the Katana of Fire, a sword gifted to Shiba Tsukune during the Clan War by the Oracle of Fire himself. The sword now rests in a place of honor within the temple.

The Water Temple is constructed of a material that looks like crystal, but feels as firm as any masonry. Master of Water Asako Bairei oversaw the temple's final construction, and though he admits that magic was used to give the temple the appearance of frozen water, he refuses to share his secrets. The temple features several beautiful fountains, as well as a number of artifacts relating to the mysterious ningyo, the strange, reclusive creatures that have dwelled in the oceans of Phoenix Clan territory since long before Rokugan even existed.

The Air Temple is a delicate, open-air structure constructed of wooden platforms supported by narrow beams. When the wind blows through the temple, the platforms move gently and emit a soothing chime. Master of Air Tamori Nakamuro designed the temple's structure with the aid of Togashi monks. While some among the Clan applaud Nakamuro's gesture of brotherhood to the Dragon, others see it as yet another sign of how far he has drifted from his Clan.

The Temple of the Void is the strangest of all the temples. It is a simple ring drawn upon the roof of the Thunder temple in the same size and shape as the other four temples, equally spaced between them. Though there is nothing there but empty air, those who visit the Void Temple say that they feel an irresistible sensation that there is something very solid where the walls should be. Shiba Ningen, Master of the Void, spends much of his time here in meditation.

The Jade Temple is the central temple of the Eight Guardians, dedicated to the Jade Dragon. The roof of this temple is open to the sky, so that those praying within can watch the sun as the Jade Dragon traces his path across the sky. It was an intentional oversight on the Isawa Family's part that the Jade Dragon's counterpart, the Obsidian Dragon, has no counterpart within the temple. The Obsidian Dragon represents greed, vice, and wickedness – and so the Masters refused to represent it.

It is unknown if the Obsidian Dragon is offended by this, or if it even cares what mortals think. The Isawa are confident that the other eight dragons will be so pleased by their temples that the Obsidian Dragon would not dare attempt to defile them. So far, at least, this has proven to be true.

Doro Owari Mura

Road's End Village is a quaint, nondescript sort of place. Imperial cartographers have often failed to take note of it on official maps, leading some to say it technically does not exist. The tiny village stands at the very edge of Phoenix territory, close to the mountain kingdoms of the Yobanjin. The Yobanjin raiders attack Doro Owari Mura once every few generations, find almost nothing worth looting, and withdraw beyond Rokugan once more. The survivors always rebuild and carry on.

The rare traveler who passes through Doro Owari Mura will be greeted warmly by the local peasants. Food and lodging will be generously provided so long as the traveler agrees to continue on his way as soon as the roads are safe. An observant visitor may notice the large number of shrines in the area, or that the people seem unusually reverent of the kami and Fortunes, or that there are no villagers under the age of twenty. Other than these things, there is nothing immediately suspicious about the village.

Doro Owari Mura has remained more or less unchanged since the early days of the Empire. It has stood, in one form or another, longer than any other Phoenix settlement save Gisei Toshi. The main difference is that while Gisei Toshi actively hides itself from the Empire, Doro Owari Mura does not. This tiny village simply does not call attention to itself.

When an Asako henshin masters all four Elemental riddles, his teachers will reveal the truth of Doro Owari Mura's existence. The rules of this place are simple. Any henshin who has mastered all four Elemental riddles is welcome to stay there. He may cast aside any political, social, and Family obligations so that he may join the village. The Asako will support his right to do so, excusing his disappearance as part of a religious retreat or, in the rare cases of very public figures, even faking the henshin's death. The henshin may live in the village as long as he likes, so long as he assists in its maintenance. This means that many would-be immortals must learn humility – and live as soldiers or peasants.

All henshin are expected to keep the village a secret, whether or not they choose to live there. If a henshin chooses to leave Doro Owari Mura, it is expected that he will never return or share the village's secret. The Asako's restrictions have not been infallible, however, and in a few rare cases, the village's secret has spread beyond the Asako Family. The Asako will vehemently deny the truth any time

it escapes: A village of immortals? Impossible. Unlikely. What a strange accusation to make.

But geography also helps keep the village from those who need not know of it. Given Doro Owari Mura's extremely remote location, few who hear rumors of the village are willing enough to undergo such a dangerous journey simply to satisfy their curiosity. Momentary breaches in secrecy have led to legends of a secret Phoenix city ruled by immortals, but these generally bleed into legends about the Hidden City of Gisei Toshi, becoming exaggerated to the point where they can scarcely be credited.

The village is, at its heart, a philosophical experiment. The henshin who live here are active seekers of Enlightenment. Their entire purpose is to discover whether or not one can more easily achieve Enlightenment when exclusively surrounded by others on the same path. When one is shielded from all distraction, from the selfishness, greed, and confusion of the outside world, does the soul become more focused? Many henshin have come here seeking exactly this truth.

The truth, thus far at least, is sadly inconclusive. More henshin have reached Enlightenment and achieved immortality here than in any other settlement in Phoenix lands. However, even the henshin realize that this is merely a matter of statistics – since everyone who lives here is a henshin, naturally, a greater number of Enlightened henshin will number among their ranks.

The belief that a soul cannot find its place in the world by remaining apart from it is not uncommon, even among the reclusive Asako. Over the centuries, many henshin have turned their back on Road's End Village. A fair number of them have gone on to achieve Enlightenment, as have several henshin who refused to ever become a part of the village at all.

To make matters even more complex, sealing off Doro Owari Mura from the outside world has proven difficult. Despite its remote location, travelers and merchants still wander through with surprising frequency. Though raids are infrequent, the Yobanjin seem to hold a curious fascination with the village, and scouts can often be seen watching from the nearby mountains. Even in the middle of nowhere, the henshin cannot entirely remove themselves from the world.

The implications are not lost upon the Asako Family. Enlightenment is not an ideal that can be easily contained or predicted. Each path to this goal is unique. The secrets of the henshin are not Enlightenment itself, but merely

tools that make that goal more attainable within a single lifetime. Though Doro Owari Mura has not proven to be a guaranteed means of Enlightenment, many henshin nonetheless enjoy the peace and security the village offers.

If nothing else, it is one place in the Empire where the henshin can discuss their strange philosophies freely and never fear that others will not understand.

Reihado Sano Ki-Rin

The Ki-Rin Shrine is one of the Empire's most famous holy sites. Early in the year 815, Asako Matoya, then the Daimyo of her Family, caught a glimpse of what seemed to be a flaming horse soaring over the plains. At the time, she discounted it as an act of her imagination. One year later, when she received word of the Unicorn Clan's return to the Empire, she realized that she had caught a glimpse of the majestic Ki-Rin, heralding the return of the Clan that once bore her name.

Matoya felt a deep sense of shame for ignoring such an important vision, and immediately set about building a shrine to honor the Ki-Rin. She spared no expense, and her efforts nearly depleted her Family's resources. Even among her own Family, there were many that questioned Matoya's actions. Was it right for her to threaten the Asako with poverty and famine merely to assuage her own guilt? Had she even seen the Ki-Rin, or had she merely concocted the story to draw attention to her Clan following the Unicorn's return? Matoya ignored her critics and continued her work, confident that the results would prove her worthy.

Unfortunately, the Asako were forced to halt construction when the shrine was only months from its completion. There were simply no more materials available in the Asako lands, and the Family's coffers were too depleted to purchase more. Matoya fell deathly ill shortly thereafter. Her son, Ryo, promised that her life's work would not go uncompleted. The morning after his mother's death, the new Daimyo thought that he saw a glimpse of the Ki-Rin in the heavens once again, though he would not reveal his vision until many years later.

One week after Matoya's death, a detachment of Unicorn samurai arrived in Asako territory. These were emissaries of the Ide Family, who had heard of Matoya's work and the great shrine she envisioned. The Ide donated large amounts of lumber, precious metals, and other supplies in the name of Champion Shinjo Nishijin.

To the Unicorn Clan, the Ki-Rin was no mere legend. It was a living symbol of the Kami, Shinjo. They would not allow her shrine to stand derelict. Reihado Sano Ki-Rin was completed and dedicated within months of Matoya's death. Her ashes were interred there to honor her work.

The following year, the Asako Family experienced an unprecedented harvest season. The resources they had expended to build the shrine were easily repaid, and the Family entered a period of prosperity that continues to this day. Matoya's tale has become an enduring legend of the Phoenix Clan, a lesson in how true faith, determination, and reverence for the kami will always be repaid. Though the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei now preside over the Shrine, the Phoenix Clan – and the Asako in particular – have always been honored guests within its halls.

Reihado Sano Ki-Rin is a popular destination for scholars and holy pilgrims. The monks who tend the shrine are known for their hospitality and gentle good nature. Though the shrine is in Phoenix territory, the monks who dwell here show no favoritism to any Clan.

During the Dragon-Phoenix War, the shrine became a symbol of the brutal conflict between the two Clans. When Junnosuke-rikugunshokan captured the area, the monks offered him no resistance so long as he did not harm the

shrine. In return, he allowed them to continue their duties unmolested. During the Phoenix Clan's long, brutal siege of the area, several of the monks even aided the Dragon in the shrine's defense. When the war ended and the Dragon withdrew, the monks welcomed the Phoenix as if nothing had happened.

In the following years, it has become customary for veterans of the Dragon-Phoenix war to journey to the shrine. Along the sides of the path leading up the mountain, Dragon and Phoenix samurai alike have planted wooden swords bearing the names of friends who died in the war. It has become a tradition for warriors from both sides of the conflict to walk along this path, among these symbols of fallen comrades and former enemies, to thank them for their sacrifice and to pray for enduring peace.

Despite its distance from Unicorn territory, the shrine is also revered by Unicorn samurai. Many Unicorn, particularly members of Shinjo's bloodline, undertake warrior pilgrimages so that they can visit Reihado Sano Ki-Rin. It is customary for such Unicorn visitors to pray for eight days without food, one day for each century they spent beyond the Empire, in hopes that their Kami will grant them a vision of their destiny. It is also customary for these pilgrims to never speak of their visions to anyone.





Sumai Mura, the Holy Home Village

During Shinsei's time among the people of Rokugan, he rarely stayed in one place for long. His stay in Otosan Uchi, where he prepared the Kami and Seven Thunders for their battle against Fu Leng, was one notable exception. His time in the lands of the Dragon Clan, where he fasted with Togashi, is another. The Holy Home Village is yet another. For two months, Shinsei made his home in what was at the time a small and unremarkable village.

He spent his time among the people, telling stories of his life as well as various other parables. Shinsei's teachings deeply inspired the people of Sumai Mura, many of whom went on to become founders of the fledgling brotherhood that adopted the Little Teacher's name.

Though Shinsei was greatly respected during his lifetime, it was not until some time after his departure that the people of Rokugan began to truly comprehend the magnitude of his wisdom. The Phoenix Clan, in particular, made a point of tracking down all of Shinsei's known exploits and recording any of his known teachings.

Master of Earth Shiba Esade spent several years in Sumai Mura, collecting the tales Shinsei had told the peasants. He was so impressed by the wisdom of Shinsei's teachings that he declared the village a holy site, and began regularly reciting Shinsei's collected stories to any who would listen even as he prepared them for official inclusion in the Tao's Book of the Soul.

Pilgrims began traveling to the village so that they might hear Esade's words – and a strange thing happened. Without knowing why, each pilgrim brought with him a stone from his own home. Hundreds of such travelers passed through the village, and each deposited their stone in the village square as a gift for the Master of Earth. Esade was confused at first, but soon he realized what was meant to be. Using a combination of magic and honest work, he assembled the stones into a small shrine. The stones fit one another perfectly.

For centuries, this small shrine held Esade's original writings – an unedited account of Shinsei's teachings. Sadly, this priceless document was lost during the war against the Lying Darkness. Goju Adorai's minions, eager to destroy all traces of Rokugan's culture and history,

targeted the shrine late in the war. Though the attendant monks defended the shrine valiantly, they were no match for Adorai's assassins. The shrine was destroyed and Esade's original works destroyed.

After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Phoenix Clan began a crusade to restore all that the Darkness had destroyed. Master of Earth Isawa Taeruko rebuilt Esade's shrine. Though Esade's writings could not be recovered, a copy of Isawa Osugi's New Tao – documenting the conversations between Emperor Toturi I and Shinsei's descendant, the Hooded Ronin – was enshrined within the Holy Home Village.

The New Tao is not as well known or accepted among Rokugani scholars as its predecessor, but it is a source of great wisdom nonetheless. Many holy pilgrims continue to journey to the rebuilt shrine, in hopes that the attendant monks will allow them to study the New Tao. The monks of Sumai Mura are strangely selective about whom they allow to view the New Tao. Only those who can prove that they possess extraordinary wisdom and honor are allowed to view Osugi's original scroll.

In the decades since the New Tao's arrival, only three scholars have been allowed to produce copies. One copy currently holds a place of honor in the Imperial Libraries. Asahina Sekawa of the Crane Clan copied a second. The third was copied by Yogo Tjeki of the Scorpion Clan. The monks granted Tjeki the right to copy the New Tao as a reward for his heroic recovery of the original Tao, which was believed lost to the Lying Darkness. In return, Tjeki allowed the monks to copy the original Tao. That copy now rests beside Osugi's scrolls within the shrine at Sumai Mura.

Masters of Magic: The Phoenix

ASAKO BUSHIKEN, RELUCTANT DAIMYO

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 4
	Stamina: 4	Agility: 3		
Honor: 3.2	Status: 7.0	Glory: 2.0		

SCHOOL/RANK: Asako Henshin 3, Golden Arm 1

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Large

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Contrary

KIHO: Air Fist, Freezing the Lifeblood, Cleansing Spirit

MYSTERIES: Air (2 free Raises), Water (1 free Raise), Earth

RIDDLES: Air (2 free Raises), Water (1 free Raise), Earth

SKILLS: Athletics (Climbing) 4, Calligraphy 3, Defense 6, Instruction 6, Jiujutsu 6, Lore (Elements) (Air, Water, Earth) 6, Medicine 4, Meditation (Zanji) 5, Staves 4, Theology 4

The newest Daimyo of the Asako is not what many would have expected. Where his predecessor was a quiet and reclusive man, Bushiken is a young, energetic sohei monk. Furthermore, Bushiken has spent the last ten years of his life in self-imposed exile, claiming that he no longer believed in his Family's teachings.

There is more to the story, of course.

The Asako monks raised Bushiken after his parents perished in a Yobanjin raid. His wisdom and strength were so prodigious that he soon gained the attention of the henshin, who invited him to study at Kyuden Asako. There, he became the favored pupil of Asako Toshi. During a particularly harsh winter, Bushiken was sent to care for a sickly monk living in a small shrine in the Isawa Woodlands. Over the next few months, the fevered old man babbled the secrets of henshin immortality to Bushiken. He whispered of the path to immortality and godhood left behind by Isawa, and passed by Shiba to only those few who bear the Asako name.

The boy was outraged.

He could not believe that the Asako monks would hide such a secret from the world. With all the misery and suffering in the Empire, he could not believe anyone could be so selfish and cowardly, let alone an order of holy men supposedly dedicated to helping those in need.

So Bushiken abandoned the Asako, though he had only just begun his own path to immortality. He did not want their wisdom. He did not want their gifts. He did not want to be immortal if it meant living in a world where people like his parents could be slaughtered so meaninglessly. Instead, he set out to use his Asako training to make a real difference in the world.

For years he wandered Rokugan, offering his protection to any who were in need. Sadly, with the conflicts that so regularly threatened the Empire, he often found his martial talents more useful than his wisdom. He has fought against bandits, against samurai, and even against the merciless denizens of the Shadowlands. In time, a handful of others approached him, mostly peasants and ronin

who wished to follow his example. And so the Order of the Golden Arm was founded, an independent order of sohei.

As time passed, Bushiken began to recognize that the world was not a simple place. Many of those whom the Golden Arm protected sought to manipulate or betray them for their own ends. He slowly grew more cynical and bitter. In time, he began to wonder if the Asako had truly been wrong to guard their secrets so carefully.

When Asako Toshi fell ill, most henshin were astonished when the old man declared Bushiken as his successor. They were even more astonished when Bushiken arrived even though no one had sent for him. The young sohei had no idea that Toshi had chosen him as his successor. He simply heard his old master was ill and wanted to apologize for his youthful arrogance.

Now he finds the destiny of an entire Family in his hands. At first, he was tempted to simply deny the appointment, but he knows that he cannot. The world needs the Asako Family's guidance – and the Asako Family need *his* guidance.

To deny either would be cowardice.

AGASHA SANAMI

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 3				

Honor: 4.1	Status: 3.3	Glory: 3.5
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SCHOOL/RANK: Agasha Shugenja 3

ADVANTAGES: Benten's Blessing, Chosen By the Oracles (Fire), Irreproachable (2)

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (destroy the Dark Oracles), Insensitive

KIHO: Kharmic Strike

SKILLS: Courtier 3, Divination 4, Etiquette 3, Explosives 4, Calligraphy 2, Medicine (Herbalism) 5, Meditation 4, Shadowlands Lore (Dark Oracles) 4, Spellcraft 3, Theology 3.

SPELLS: (Spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Summon*, Counterspell*, The Fires From Within, Hurried Steps*, Katana of Fire, Burn the Mind, Wall of Fire, Fires From the Forge, Jade Strike*, Strength of the Crow, By the Light of Lady Moon, Path to Inner Peace*.

Sanami hails from a wealthy, high-ranking Agasha family. Sadly, with four older sisters and five younger brothers her highest hopes for the future were an arranged marriage.

Rather than wait for her parents to find a suitable house to whom to trade her off, she decided to seek out her own destiny. She studied in the ways of the court as well as the art of magic, excelling at both so that her Clan would have fewer excuses to refuse to recognize her usefulness.

Following the Phoenix Clan's withdrawal from Toshi Ranbo, she found her opportunity. After their heroic intervention to save the Imperial City, the Phoenix was hurrying to reassert its role as the Empire's peacemakers. Diplomats were quickly – but discreetly – dispatched throughout the Empire. The Clan needed every capable political mind it could spare. Sanami was one of the first to volunteer. Her eagerness impressed her Daimyo (and her family's standing didn't hurt either) so she was dispatched to Kyuden Ikoma. She was elated at such a prestigious appointment. Finally, this was her chance to do something significant. This was her chance to truly shine.

The nightmares began not long after she arrived at the Lion castle. They were always the same. She found herself trapped in a cave, alone and defenseless. A wall of searing flame roared around her, singeing her skin. A single man stood the depths of the fire. The flames did not touch him. It seemed almost as if he were a natural part of them. He watched her patiently, dispassionately. She recognized his weathered face, somehow, though she had never seen him before. This was Tamori Chosai, her father's cousin.

This was the Dark Oracle of Fire.

In her mind, she witnessed the final battle between the Oracle and the heroes of the Dragon and Phoenix. She watched as Isawa Nakamuro used the Dark Covenant of Fire to banish Chosai beyond the borders of Rokugan.

But simple banishment was not enough to contain the Oracle's power. Sanami's bloodline placed her close enough so that the Oracle could reach her, with effort, but distant enough that none would take notice. He cursed her, binding her to tell no one of the dreams, and promising that the nightmares would not cease as long as his exile continued.

Reluctantly, Sanami has been compelled to learn as much as she can about the Dark Oracles. Fortunately the Lion compile information on all of their enemies, and they have accumulated a great deal of lore since their encounters with the Dark Oracle of Water. They have been quite happy to share their knowledge in return for Sanami's advice on various magical matters. Along the way, she has become quite close to Lady Yasuko and learned a great deal.

She will find a way to return the Dark Oracle of Fire to Rokugan so that she can be free of Chosai's curse. But first, and more importantly, she must find a way to kill him when he arrives. Unfortunately most of the Lion Clan's information is quite specific to the Dark Oracle of Water. There are many references to his known powers and his suspected weaknesses, including the last known locations of the Dark Covenant of Water.

If she can find the Dark Covenant, perhaps she can face the Dark Oracle of Water. If she can defeat such a being, then perhaps she can face Chosai as well, break her curse, end her nightmares, and cleanse her Family honor. She knows she cannot possibly fight such a battle alone, but how can she seek allies when the Dark Oracle's magic prevents her from even speaking of her plight?

AGASHA TAMAKI

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
	Stamina: 4		Perception: 3	
Honor: 3.6	Status: 2.5	Glory: 2.9		

SHADOWLANDS TAINT: 0.1 (Tamaki is unaware of this)

SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Shugenja (Earth) 2

ADVANTAGES: Higher Purpose (Rebuild the Empire)

DISADVANTAGES: Dark Fate, Idealistic, Obligation (Spider Clan – 4)

KIHO: Heart of Stone

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Engineering 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Lore: History: 3, Medicine (Herbalism) 3, Meditation 3, Spellcraft (Earth) 2, Theology 2.

SPELLS: (Spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Summon*, Counterspell*, Elemental Ward, Tetsubo of Earth*, Walk Without Passing*, Path to Inner Peace*, Nature's Touch, Wind-Borne Slumbers*, Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Curse of Stone.

Though still a young shugenja, Tamaki has changed a great deal in the three years since her gempukku. She was a member of the late Isawa Sachi's last group of students. The legendary Master of Earth impressed many traits on her, among them patience, determination, and a great desire for peace. He taught her that it was the Phoenix Clan's responsibility to spread peace throughout the Empire, and that even those who sought war deserved a second



chance. He also taught her that those who truly desired peace must be prepared to fight those who spurned that second chance, and to never abandon the struggle for a unified Empire.

Young Tamaki was eager to prove herself and impress her teacher. During the war against the Mantis Clan, unfortunately, her youth and inexperience led her to a number of inglorious assignments. She was usually held in reserve to treat injured soldiers, or sent to patrol empty roads far from the front line. The lack of action annoyed her, but she accepted her duties with patient fortitude – just as her master had taught. Her time would come, if such was her destiny.

Tamaki accepted the news of her master's death with grim resolve. She felt no anger or sadness. Sachi had fulfilled his destiny. His death had helped end the war and saved countless souls on both sides. At his funeral, she vowed she would honor his memory and never rest so long as there was strife in the Empire.

All of this seems a fairly typical beginning for an idealistic young Phoenix shugenja, but this is where Tamaki's tale takes a turn. After the war ended, she requested permis-

sion to embark upon a musha shugyo. She intended to travel throughout the Empire, using her Earth magic to repair and renew any temples that had been damaged during the Rain of Blood and various battles between the Clans. Her teachers approved of Tamaki's bravery, ambition, and piety. They gave her their blessing.

At first, all was well. She journeyed west, across the Phoenix lands and through Dragon Clan territory. The Dragon accepted her help graciously, giving her high hopes for the journey ahead. When she reached the Shinomen Forest, however, she was attacked by a group of bandits. She fought back fiercely, but her magic was strangely sluggish. The kami were slow to respond. She felt a growing nausea – then noticed the gash on her thigh where a bandit's arrow had poisoned her. She tried to summon a final, defiant spell to destroy her enemies, but it was too late. She slipped into unconsciousness.

She awoke in a small camp, tended by a kindly old woman. Her spell scrolls were laid beside her palette, but

her clothes were new and her valuables were gone. Her wounds were completely healed.



She realized that the men and women who surrounded her were not the same men who attacked her. They were samurai – ronin – who all wore a strange crawling spider mon. They revealed that they been tracking the bandits for various crimes against local farmers. After dealing with the rabble, they discovered Tamaki in an iron cage, delirious from her infected wound. After dealing with the bandits, they nursed her back to health. Unfortunately, the bandits had apparently disposed of Tamaki's horse and other valuables. They had kept only her spell scrolls, which would have been impossible to sell.

These men and women called themselves the Spider Clan. They gladly escorted her to the nearest Unicorn village before vanishing back into the forest. There, she heard many stories of her mysterious benefactors and similar acts of heroism they had performed throughout the area. When she discovered the date, she also realized that she had apparently been a delirious captive for several weeks before her rescue.

Now, Tamaki wants to know more. These anonymous heroes are just the sort of men and women who would understand the virtues Master Sachi taught. Who are these mysterious Spider Clan samurai who rescued her? And how can she repay them?

ASAKO JURO, INSPIRED INQUISITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Awareness: 5	Willpower: 5	Intelligence: 4	Perception: 5	

Honor: 4.3	Status: 5.4	Glory: 7.9
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SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Shugenja 4 (Air), Isawa Inquisitor 1

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Heartless, Irreproachable (4), Precise Memory, Read Lips

DISADVANTAGES: Meddler

KIHO: The Great Silence, Soul of the Four Winds

SKILLS: Anatomy (Torture) 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 3, Investigation 6, Jiu-jitsu 3, Medicine 6, Meditation 6, Spellcraft (Air) 6, Theology 5, Shadowlands Lore 7, Underworld 3.

SPELLS: (Spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Summon*, Counterspell*, By the Light of Lord Moon*, Secrets on the Wind, Hidden Visage, Jade Strike*, Fires From the Forge, Path to Inner Peace, Yari of Air*, The Fires From Within, Know the Mind*, Strength of the Crow, Slayer's Knives, Tomb of Jade, Blessings of Jizo*, Prison of Earth.

He still remembers running through the snowy forest. His mother had taken him and his brother there because she was scared of something, but she wouldn't say what. She promised that they would return home soon, and that father would come back and everything would be all right. There were others there, as well, mothers and old people and children. Some were even peasants.

It worried him that his mother was so afraid, but things really weren't so bad. The forest was a very exciting place to explore, and it was nice to have other children to talk to. It was strange, how the peasant children weren't really all that different than the samurai.

He still remembers the day when the messenger arrived. He was out playing, near the road, with his brother and two of his new friends. The man rode up on a horse, a sad young man in a tattered brown robe. A big flag fluttered from the back of his saddle, a black banner with a strange silver circle painted on it. His brother said it was a Miya messenger – an Imperial herald. Juro had never seen one of those before.

The Miya rode right past the children without a word, bound for the house where his mother and the others were waiting. They followed, but the messenger passed them again on his way back down the road. The man looked exhausted, but he did not linger. When Juro arrived at his house, he saw everyone was outside, laughing and cheering – except for his mother, who watched the clouds with a strange, sad smile. She told Juro that his father would not be returning, because he died saving the world.

Juro later learned that his father, Asako Saburo, had died fighting Fu Leng's armies on the Day of Thunder. Saburo was not a legendary hero of his Clan. He is not remembered alongside Isawa Tadaka or Shiba Ujimitsu. He was just a brave man who died fighting evil. He followed in his father's footsteps, hoping that he would one day be an Inquisitor and make his mother proud.

And so he did. His mother died peacefully many years ago, as did his brother. He knows they were proud of him, even if he never had a chance to prove himself as his father did. With each day that passes, Juro feels a little older. He fears that age, not Fu Leng, will bring his ultimate defeat. He secretly hates the fact that he has never been given the chance to demonstrate his courage as his father did.

Though many have urged him to retire, Juro refuses. As head of the Inquisitors, he is a harsh, unrelenting, and unforgiving master. After all – for those who have failed

to give their lives for there Empire, what else is there to give?

In fact, Juro knows that they still have everything to give.

ISAWA MINIKO, PRODIGY OF WAR

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
Reflexes: 3				
Honor: 3.2		Status: 3.1		Glory: 3.7

SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Tensai (Water) 3

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Daredevil, Fleet (4), Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Fascination (Violence)

KIHO: Ebb and Flow, Earth Fist

SKILLS: Battle 4, Calligraphy 3, Lore: History 4, Horsemanship 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Yarijutsu 4, Meditation 4, Spellcraft 3, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Shintao) 3.

SPELLS: (Spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Summon*, Counterspell*, Path to Inner Peace*, Heart of Mortality*, Reversal of Fortunes, Yari of Air, Castle of Water, Elemental Ward, Tremor*, Silent Waters*, Wall of Water, Summon Fog.*

Isawa Miniko knows a few things about war:

War is a coarse and filthy activity.

War is also, unfortunately a constant. There will always be war in the Empire.

This is something Miniko has come to accept and, in a way, enjoy.

In the courts and temples, Isawa Miniko pays lip service to her Clan's pacifist philosophy. She understands the Way of the Phoenix very well, and even promotes her its highest ideals. She knows in her heart that it is important to desire peace. After all, the hardship one experiences through pursuing the unattainable is the truest path to Enlightenment. Is it not?

During her Clan's war against the Mantis Clan, Miniko learned the joy of combat. She found that she loved nothing more than to summon her Water magic to capsize a helpless Mantis vessel, sending dozens of trained soldiers to drown in the icy depths. With her magic, she was a terror on the battlefield. Normal soldiers could not hope to stop her. Enemy shugenja could not hope to compete with her superior Isawa training. Those few who mustered their courage and fought her with organized tactics quickly discovered that she was not alone either – legions of Shiba bushi stood ready to die for her so that she could live to unleash her magic another day.

She was invincible. Or close enough, in any case.

Of course, to take such joy in such bloody work was unseemly for a Phoenix. Miniko always kept her bloodlust just beneath the surface. When the battle was done, she would mourn the deaths of her allies and say a prayer for her enemies, all the while exulting at her own prowess and noting ways to improve her technique in the next engagement. Her reputation as a battle shugenja grew. Even the Elemental Masters recognized her talents.

She found that when her Clan's war with the Mantis ended, she was disappointed. It saddened her to learn that the Shadowlands had manipulated both sides, and that the Battle of Broken Waves was the end of the conflict. She had eagerly anticipated the prospect of invading the Mantis Isles. Such dreams, sadly, would never be realized.

So Miniko looks to the future.

The Phoenix have become outspoken in the courts, proudly decreeing their renewed dedication to peace. Miniko cannot agree heartily enough. Such declarations, after all, will inevitably be perceived as weakness. In time, someone will strike, perhaps the Scorpion this time, or even the Lion. A chance to match her skills against the Lion Clan would be quite exciting. Miniko eagerly awaits the day that someone makes a mistake; a brash word in court, an insult taken too personally. Swords drawn. Blood spilled. It always happens.

War will come to the Phoenix Clan again, even if Miniko must help matters along. She continues to preach her Clan's pacifistic rhetoric. Loudly. Boldly. She speaks with such pride that, in time, someone will almost surely take offense.

War is a coarse and filthy activity, but in the end, Isawa Miniko doesn't mind.

War is the clearest path to glory.

ISAWA SHOKUTA, HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 3			Strength: 4	
Honor: 3.0		Status: 2.3		Glory: 2.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Tensai (Earth) 3

ADVANTAGES: Friendly Kami (Earth), Hands of Stone, Large, Strength of the Earth (4)

DISADVANTAGES: Benten's Curse

KIHO: Earth Fist, Heart of Stone, Freezing the Lifeblood

SKILLS: Athletics 5, Calligraphy 2, Lore: History 3, Hunt-

ing 5, Jiujutsu 4, Medicine 4, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 2, Theology (Shintao) 2, Tea Ceremony 1.

SPELLS: (Spells marked with * are Innate Abilities) Sense*, Commune*, Summon*, Counterspell*, Hands of Clay, Tetsubo of Earth, Armor of Earth, Path to Inner Peace, The Fury of Osano-Wo, Sympathetic Energies, Walk Without Passing, Earth's Protection, Wall of Earth, Breath of the Fire Dragon

Shokuta has never been a kind or gentle man. His demeanor is much like the earth itself. He is blunt, coarse, and though normally patient his temper is fearsome to behold. He always felt out of place in the company of priests and scholars, preferring the silence of nature to the company of other people. Shortly after his gempukku, he withdrew into the mountains to tend some of the Clan's most remote and obscure shrines. His superiors were content to leave him there, where his hunger for solitude would provide some service to the Clan.

For many years, Shokuta was alone and happy. He mastered the craggy mountains of the Phoenix Clan as have few others in history. He would occasionally appear to guide lost travelers or to shield unlucky pilgrims from

avalanches with his magic. In time, Shokuta became almost a legendary figure. Those who frequented the area called him the Heart of the Mountain, comparing him to a friendly spirit who protected travelers. Shokuta ignored the stories. What did he care what others said of him? So long as they left him and his mountains alone, he did not care.

But Shokuta was not destined to remain alone forever.

It began just a few months ago. A sudden storm struck the mountains, forcing Shokuta to take refuge in a cave. Making the best of the situation, he decided to spend his time in meditation. To his surprise, when he reached out to commune with the Earth spirits, he heard a cry of pain and fear. To hear such a thing was not unusual. Despite over a thousand years of living in the mountains many Phoenix were sadly ignorant of the land's dangers. This cry was different. It did not come from the mountains, but from deep within the mountain.

Shokuta snapped out of his reverie and hurried deeper into the cavern to help. After several hours of searching through the tunnels, using only his magic to guide his footsteps, he found the voice that had called to him. It



was not human at all, but a copper-skinned creature with a long mane of shaggy hair and luminous yellow eyes: a zokujin.

The creature was in bad shape. It wore broken shackles around its wrists. An arrow was lodged in its back, and the wound had begun to fester. When Shokuta approached, the creature fixed him with a hopeless gaze. It had come here to die. It seemed surprised when Shokuta used his magic to remove the shackles and tend its wound.

Over the next few weeks, he nursed the zokujin back to health. The creature expressed its gratitude and gave its name as Grukut, communicating through a raw and primal form of Earth magic. He learned that Grukut was an escaped slave, and that the rest of its tribe still toiled in a mine deep in the heart of Lion Clan territory.

Shokuta had heard that these creatures had served the Lion, but he did not realize they were slaves. How could anyone, even a Lion, treat such an intelligent creature with such brutality? It does not matter. He now knows what he must do. Though the Lion lands are far away and he will likely find few to sympathize with the zokujin's

plight, Shokuta now knows his purpose. The Heart of the Mountain now makes his way toward the lands of the Lion.

SHIBA FUGIMORI, AMBITIOUS BUSHI

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
Stamina: 3				

Honor: 2.1	Status: 2.3	Glory: 2.5
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SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Bente's Blessing, Dangerous Beauty, Kharmic Tie (Shiba Miiko, 3), Luck (6)

DISADVANTAGES: Gullible, Lechery (3)

KATA: Striking as Fire, Tail of the Sun

SKILLS: Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Spears 5, Theology 2.

Shiba Fugimori and his twin sister, Miiko, are rarely seen apart from one another. This may seem strange to those who do not know them well, as the siblings could hardly



be less alike. Fugimori is friendly, cheerful, and gregarious while his sister is harsh, impatient, and studious.

And yet, since childhood, they have been the best of friends. Fugimori has always looked out for his "onee-chan" – and she has always needed it. After all, she has such a way of getting on people's bad side. In a way, he thinks, that's why he has always tried to be so sociable. He's had to make up for his surly little sister.

Shiba Fugimori is a talented young bushi, though perhaps not quite as talented as Miiko. Where his skill with the yari and katana failed him, his way with people more than compensated. Shiba Hikari, his sensei, was so fond of the boy that she offered to arrange an assignment anywhere in the Empire that he wished.

Fugimori happily accepted, but only on the condition that his sister could accompany him. Hikari hesitated at first; Miiko was a willful student, well known for arguing with her teacher. Even more maddening, Miiko was all too often right. Hikari was hesitant to offer such a reward if it would benefit both twins.

But Fugimori was persistent and clever. His easy charm eventually changed Hikari's mind. After all, if she disliked Miiko so much, wouldn't sending her away from Shiro Shiba be a good idea? The sensei relented. Both twins were given a promotion and dispatched to Toshi Ranbo. Fugimori was assigned as yojimbo to Otomo Hokatsu, an important Imperial courtier. His sister, sadly, was assigned to one of the silly Seppun wretches who pray on the city walls every day. Unfortunate, perhaps, but you can't have everything.

Fugimori has enjoyed his stay in the Imperial City thus far. Though he missed most of the recent battles (he was protecting his charge at the time), he is proud to have been a part of Imperial history. His sister is apparently a hero now. He knew she would be! He couldn't be prouder.

In the meantime, Fugimori is enjoying himself. Toshi Ranbo is a glorious, beautiful, luxurious place. He could stay here forever and be happy. He knows it won't last, of course. His sister is restless. She needs the glory of battle to sustain her, and she won't find it in Toshi Ranbo now that things are peaceful again.

SHIBA MIIKO, HEROIC YOJIMBO

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Awareness: 4		Agility: 4		
Honor: 3.7	Status: 3.0		Glory: 3.4	

SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Yojimbo 3

ADVANTAGES: Irreproachable (2), Kharmic Tie (Shiba Fugimori, 3)

DISADVANTAGES: Overconfident, Unlucky (6)

KATA: Eyes of the Phoenix, Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Battle 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Spears 2, Theology 2.

Some days it seems like Shiba Miiko has spent a lifetime looking out for her onii-chan. He's a good man at heart, but he's also a lazy, feckless, lecher. Miiko has lost count of the number of angry brothers and disgruntled boyfriends who came looking to even the score with her twin brother Fugimori. She pummeled them into the dirt every time, of course. They should have known better than to threaten her brother.

Miiko has always been a blunt and honest person. Someone has to be, after all. It's not going to be her little brother. He's far too occupied talking his way out of guard duty and sneaking into young girls' bed chambers to worry about honor. She knows that her straightforward attitude sometimes irritates others, but she doesn't care. She would rather say what's on her mind than be someone she isn't.

So it came as a surprise when her sensei arranged for her promotion and assignment to Toshi Ranbo. Old sensei Hikari had never liked Miiko much. She hadn't counted on anything more glorious than a guard post in a border farming village.

But then maybe the old crone had finally come to her senses and recognized talent. After all, she sent Fugimori too, and her brother always had a great deal more potential than people realized. If only he could keep his focus and show a little self-discipline, he'd be fine.

Miiko was assigned as bodyguard to the honorable Seppun Kuzo, a member of the Hidden Guard. Thus, when battle came to Toshi Ranbo, she was right on the front lines, protecting her noble charge as he sought to maintain the wards on the Imperial City. She performed admirably in helping secure the city, and was commended by the Hidden Guard as well as the Master of Fire herself. That was a good day.

She just wishes that her brother would learn from her example. He should be more honorable, more courageous. Instead, she fears that Fugimori is becoming corrupted by the luxury of Toshi Ranbo. If he isn't careful, he's going to get into trouble. She knows he's been flirting with Otomo

Hokatsu's wife. She hopes that he hasn't done anything stupid. As much as she loves being a hero, Shiba Miiko knows that she has to get her brother out of this city. And she'll have to follow him, of course.

Someone has to protect him, after all.

New Mechanics

New Basic School: Agasha Shugenja School (Shugenja)

Though the traditions of the Agasha Family extend back to the very dawn of the Empire, this school is regarded as one of the newest and most loosely established Rokugani shugenja Schools, and most certainly the newest Phoenix shugenja School. While some of this is due to the general disdain some hold toward the Agasha for abandoning their original Clan, this perception is not entirely unfounded. The teachings of the modern day Agasha Shugenja School scarcely resemble those of the Agasha when they still served the Dragon Clan.

The idea that the Agasha simply took their magical knowledge with them when they departed the Dragon Clan is a gross simplification for a number of reasons. Not only were the Agasha seeking to break with the traditions of their former Clan, they were (at the time) seeking to escape Hitomi's wrath as quickly and efficiently as possible. As a result, they only took the most essential magical texts with them when they fled their homeland.

In the decades since their induction to the Phoenix Clan, the Agasha have been forced to compensate for their lost knowledge. Through a combination of ancient Dragon texts, the personal experience of the defected Agasha Masters and the guidance of their Phoenix cousins, a new Agasha School was born.

The foundations of the School, however, are very much the same as they always were. The Agasha encourage flexibility. They reward creativity. They approach the natural world as a system of secrets, each more wondrous than the last. While they have retained their fascination with herbalism and alchemy, they have tempered that knowledge with a deeper understanding of magic. Where the Dragon Agasha once practiced the art of kagaku (alche-

my) as an independent science, the modern Agasha have incorporated their extraordinary scientific knowledge with their mystical abilities. For an Agasha, there is a little magic in everything.

Perhaps, at times, a spell can be used to unlock that magic. At other times, a chemical reaction can be used for an identical effect. For an Agasha, the best results are obtained by using both in harmony.

Benefit: +1 to any Trait

Honor: 2.5

Skills: Calligraphy, Explosives, Medicine (Herbalism), Meditation, Spellcraft, Theology, any one High Skill.

Outfit: Wakizashi, tanto; kimono and sandals, scroll satchel, traveling pack; 4 koku.

Affinity/Deficiency: The Agasha practice a primal form of magic that focuses on aggression, inspiration, and creativity. As a result, an Agasha shugenja possesses an Affinity for Fire. They also possess a deficiency for Air magic that stems from their tendency to neglect subtlety and strike directly at the heart of a matter – whether that matter is mystical, military, or even political. The Agasha look down upon their Tamori cousins for abandoning the magical arts that their ancestors practiced for centuries. The merits and weaknesses of the two Families' relative magical techniques is a matter of frequent (and sometimes violent) debate whenever an Agasha and a Tamori meet.

TECHNIQUE: THE FIRE OF INSPIRATION

You gain a Free Raise when using any Agasha Alchemical potion (see below). This Free Raise has the same restrictions as the ones normally granted by such a potion, but it can be used with a spell of any Element. For instance, an Earth Potion will grant an Agasha 2 Free Raises to increase the duration of an Earth Spell, or 1 Free Raise to increase the duration of any spell.

When creating potions, you receive additional potions equal to your Fire Ring. You may create potions every 3 days, and your potions last for 3 days before they lose their potency.

You may also create and use Void potions.

AGASHA POTIONS

The use of alchemy in combination with magic is all a part of the Agasha shugenja's art. At the GM's discretion, any shugenja who has trained with the Agasha for a significant amount of time can use their techniques to create Agasha

Potions. In game terms, any member of the Phoenix Clan likely has some rudimentary familiarity with Agasha techniques, as do those who can demonstrate some friendship or Family connection to the Agasha. Keep in mind that the Agasha do not share all of their secrets. Potions created and used by a true Agasha Shugenja are always more potent.

Gathering Materials: To create potions, you must spend an hour in a wilderness area, garden, or well-stocked herbalist's shop gathering materials. In the case of the shop, you will need to pay for materials – usually about 1 bu per potion.

Brewing Potions: Following this gathering period, you must spend another hour brewing the potions. Make an Intelligence/Medicine (Herbalism) Roll against a TN of 15. If this roll is successful, you can brew a number of potions equal to your Medicine Skill. For each Raise you make on this roll, you can create an additional potion. If this roll fails, the materials are consumed and you must start from the beginning again.

The potions that you create can be any mix of Earth, Fire, Water, or Air Potions – your choice. True Agasha shugenja can also create Void Potions, but each Void Po-

tion that you craft counts as 3 ordinary potions against the number of potions you may create. You may only craft potions once per week. A potion's potency fades after one day.

Using Potions: While casting a spell, you may use a potion as indicated to gain the indicated benefits for a single spell (see below). Using the potion counts as a Simple Action if you have it close at hand. Most Agasha keep their potions in a small pouch at their hip or tucked into pockets in their sleeves.

Once a potion is created, it can be used by any shugenja. However, you may only use one potion per spell cast.

Potion Effects: Each type of potion provides Free Raises when casting specific types of spells. For more on Raises affect the casting of spells, see the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition Revised* core rule book, p. 238. Potions do not allow you to make Raises in any way that you could not normally make Raises. For instance, a Fire potion will not make a healing spell inflict Wounds.

Air Potion — You pour out the potion at your feet. You gain a Free Raise to increase the spell's Fortitude if it is an Air Spell.



Earth Potion – You pour the potion over the target (or empty it into the air if they are not close at hand). You gain a Free Raise to increase the spell's duration if it is an Earth Spell.

Fire Potion – You hurl the potion at the spell's target and gain a Free Raise to increase spell's damage if it is a Fire Spell.

Water Potion – You drink the potion. You gain a single Free Raise that may only be used to shorten the spell's Casting Time if it is a Water Spell.

Void Potion – You use the potion in a manner appropriate to the spell you are casting (throw the potion if it is a Fire Spell, drink it if it is a Water Spell, etc). You gain a single Free Raise that may only be used toward Mastering the spell. Only a student of the Agasha Shugenja school can gain this benefit.

New Path: The Temple of the Golden Arm (Monk)

The warrior monks who follow Asako Bushiken claim to be followers of Bishamon. While it is true that they honor and revere the Fortune of Strength, most of them revere their charismatic henshin teacher even more.

For many years, the monks of the Golden Arm aspired to be little more than the defenders of Toshi no Omoidasu. With Bushiken's unexpected promotion to Asako Family Daimyo, they have suddenly discovered that they are honored members of a Great Clan. While they have accepted this new responsibility dutifully, many Golden Arm monks are left to wonder if their master's new affiliation will truly lead him to the Enlightenment they feel he deserves.

Most of the original Golden Arm monks are students of the Temples of the Thousand Fortunes monk School, but Bushiken's followers hail from throughout the Brotherhood (and, more recently, from the Asako Henshin school as well).



TECHNIQUE RANK: 2

REQUIREMENTS: Meditation 3

PATH OF ENTRY: Any Monk School 1

PATH OF EGRESS: Re-enter the same Monk School

TECHNIQUE: BISHAMON'S WISDOM

You do not gain the usual 2 Kiho that monks receive for this Insight Rank. However, you can enter a special state of meditation and unlearn the Kiho you have learned, replacing them with new ones. This requires 8 hours of uninterrupted meditation followed by a Void/Meditation (Zanji) Roll against a TN of 30. If this Skill Roll is successful, you immediately lose 1 Kiho that you have learned. You may immediately learn a single Kiho of the same Mastery Level + 1 or lower.

Using this technique completely exhausts your remaining Void Points.

Your Rings are all considered to be 1 higher for the purposes of learning new Kiho.

To learn the Golden Arm Techniques requires an oath of fealty to the Phoenix Clan and the Asako Family. This may interfere with a monk's usual duties.

New Spells

Here are ten new spells, which should be treated as First Tier Spells under the Isawa code of secrecy regarding magical knowledge (see above). These spells are secrets of the Elemental Masters and they are only offered to those who have earned the Council's trust.

Keep in mind that these spells have been labeled as First Tier Spells merely to give examples of such spells. While they are unusual, they are not really any more powerful than other spells of their equivalent Mastery Rank. If you like these spells, and have no use for First Tier Spells in your campaign, feel free to offer these spells to any Phoenix shugenja.

A First Tier Spell has powerful and unique effects — it is, after all, a closely kept trade secret of Phoenix shugenja — but it isn't necessarily any more powerful than other spells of the same Mastery Level. These spells are not intended to be campaign-breakers, nor are they supposed to be invincible weapons. They are simply magical effects that offer conveniences and advantages that the Elemental Masters just wish to keep to themselves.

Air Spells

Dreamwalker

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DURATION: Total Concentration

AREA OF EFFECT: Target sleeping person

RANGE: 25'

Use of this spell grants you complete and total control of a target's dreams. You may use this as an opportunity to transmit a message, deliver a warning, or simply create a vivid fantasy. The target is not aware that the dream is your creation, or that you are even present in the dream, unless you wish it so.

A startling or unusual situation allows the dreamer to make a Contested Air Roll against you once per hour. If he succeeds, he immediately awakens and the spell ends. If this roll fails, the target remains trapped in the dream that you have created. If you inform the dreamer that he is in a dream created by this spell, he may awaken at will.

This spell does not prevent the dreamer from awakening normally (due to physical disturbance, or because he has slept enough for the night), nor does it have any other lasting effects. The dreamer will, however, remember any dream created by this spell in vivid detail.

Using this spell on the same target more than once per week grants the target a cumulative +5 bonus to attempts to awaken.

If you know a target's true name or possess a lock of his hair, the range of this spell is unlimited.

This is a First Tier Air Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Air's trust.

Vision of Comfort

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: Casual Concentration + 15 minutes

AREA OF EFFECT: Self

RANGE: Self

This spell is a slightly more potent, if less predictable, variant of the Hidden Visage spell. When cast, this spell summons a swarm of invisible Air kami that cloud the minds of those who see you. Anyone who sees you will instead see someone whom he trusts and, if possible, someone who would not look out of place in the context of the situation.

For example, if you approach a city guard in the street, you might resemble a normal citizen out for a walk or even

another guard. While you have an idea of who you look like to each person that sees you, you do not necessarily know the exact identity of your disguise.

The only catch is that you have absolutely no control over your illusionary appearance, so that two different viewers will often see you as two entirely different people. Thus, this spell is best used in large crowds – and you'd best avoid drawing attention.

This is a First Tier Air Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Air's trust.

SPECIAL RAISES: For each Raise that you make, you can extend the effect of this spell over another person. The Air kami are wise enough not to give two targets an identical disguise.

Earth Spells

Fortify the Soul

MASTERY LEVEL: 3

DURATION: 5 rounds

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 target

RANGE: 25'

This spell summons a friendly Earth kami to protect the target's spirit, shielding it from misfortune. Each time the target suffers Wounds, any kept DR die that would normally have exploded are instead counted as if they rolled a 5. Once this spell has negated a number of exploding die equal to your Earth Ring, it ends.

This is a First Tier Earth Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Earth's trust.

Wandering Stone

MASTERY LEVEL: 5

DURATION: 1 Year

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 stone

RANGE: Touch

You create a mystical connection between yourself and a piece of stone, embedding a part of your spirit within it.

Once this spell is cast, you can immediately transport yourself to the stone's present location by spending 4 Void Points. This effect is instantaneous and has no maximum range, even allowing transportation between spirit realms. However, this spell does not grant you any awareness of the stone's current location or condition. If you attempt to transport yourself to a stone that has been destroyed, nothing happens.

You may only have 1 Wandering Stone active at a time. If you wish to cast this spell again while you already have a Wandering Stone, you must first destroy your existing Wandering Stone or wait for the duration of the spell to expire.

This is a First Tier Earth Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Earth's trust.

Fire Spells

A Fire Divided

MASTERY LEVEL: 3

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 willing donor and a recipient.

RANGE: Touch

While Fire is not known for its healing properties, it is nonetheless a source of life and vibrant energy. By using this spell, you can share those energies between two persons or living creatures.

The person or creature that serves donor must do so willingly. It immediately suffers 1k1 Wounds. This damage cannot be reduced or negated in any way. The recipient is then healed of 1k1 Wounds, but never less than the amount of Wounds you inflicted upon the donor. You may select yourself as the donor or the recipient when casting this spell.

This is a First Tier Fire Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Fire's trust.

SPECIAL RAISES: You may Raise any number of times to inflict +1k1 Wounds per Raise called on the donor, in order to gain a +1k1 Wounds healed per Raise called bonus. The number of Wounds healed of the target may not be less than the number of Wounds inflicted on the donor.

Invigorating Flame

MASTERY LEVEL: 3

DURATION: 1 hour

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 weapon

RANGE: Touch

This spell charges one weapon with searing flame. For the duration of this spell, the target weapon gains a DR bonus equal to your Fire Ring. At any time, you may choose to expend a "charge" of fire from the weapon. This gives the target weapon a +1k0 bonus to its next attack roll and produces a brilliant burst of flame when a target is struck. Each time you expend a charge, the DR bonus decreases

by one. When it is reduced to 0, the spell ends. You may add as many charges as you like to a single attack roll.

You need not wield this weapon yourself. Whoever wields it chooses when and where to expend the fire charges.

This is a First Tier Fire Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Fire's trust.

Water Spells

Frozen Tomb

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DURATION: Casual Concentration

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 target

RANGE: 25'

You summon a vengeful Water kami, freezing the target person or creature in a prison of razor-sharp ice. The target cannot move, speak, or act in any way so long as you maintain the spell unless it attempts to shatter the icy prison.

To break the prison, the target must succeed at a Contested Water Roll against you. You may choose to fail this roll. If the target breaks the prison, it immediately suffers 3k3 Wounds as the frozen kami pierces his flesh.

If the target suffers Wounds for any reason, the spell immediately ends without inflicting any Wounds. If you move more than 100' from the target, the spell immediately ends without inflicting any Wounds.

This is a First Tier Water Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Water's trust.

Find the Source

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

DURATION: Instantaneous

AREA OF EFFECT: 1 magical effect

RANGE: Touch

This spell can be utilized to determine the source of any known magical effect. For this spell to be successful, you must know the name of the spell that produced the effect. To know that someone put a magical ward on a door is not enough; you must know, for example, that your target magic is a Symbol of Fire for this spell to be effective.

When this spell is complete, you must immediately make a Contested Roll using your Air against the Ring that the original caster used to create the effect. If you fail,

nothing happens and you may never cast this spell on the same effect again. If you succeed, you receive a vision of the spell's original casting, allowing you to determine the identity of the caster.

This spell can only be cast as a ritual.

While this spell may be used to determine who originally summoned an oni, the oni itself is considered to be the magical effect; therefore you must touch it in order to cast the spell. Naturally, this makes for a very dangerous method of information gathering.

This is a First Tier Water Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Water's trust.

Void Spells

Yumi of the Void

MASTERY LEVEL: 1

DURATION: 1 minute

AREA OF EFFECT: Self

RANGE: Self

You can reach into the Void and draw out a bow crafted from pure, inky nothingness. This weapon is wielded like a normal yumi, but you may spend Void Points to wield it as if you had Ranks in the Kyujutsu Skill equal to the number of Void Points that you spent + 1. The Yumi of the Void has a DR 3k3 and never runs out of ammunition (you cannot fire normal arrows out of this bow). If you become unconscious or die while this spell is in effect, the Yumi vanishes. The Yumi has an effective range equal to your remaining Void Points x 50.'

This is a First Tier Void Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Void's trust.

SPECIAL RAISES: You may Raise once and only once to increase the Yumi's DR by +1k0.

Saving Fortune

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DURATION: 1 Day

AREA OF EFFECT: Self

RANGE: Self

This spell allows you to draw upon your inner strength and set aside those energies until they are needed.

When this spell is cast, you must immediately spend all of your remaining Void Points. Roll a number of dice equal to double the number of Void Points you just spent. If none of these dice explode, the spell has no effect. If



any dice explode, they are “stored” by this spell. Record the results of each stored die separately.

At any time within the next 24 hours, you can draw upon the good fortune you have stored. Any time you roll a die and it explodes, you may immediately (before re-rolling it) replace the result of that die with 1 of the dice that you have stored. Alternately, any time you spend a Void Point on a roll you may add 1 of your stored dice to the total. This replaces the normal effects of spending a Void Point.

You may only use 1 stored die on any given roll. Once a stored die is used, it is expended and no longer available.

For example: Shiba Ningen casts this spell when he has 6 Void Points remaining. He rolls a 5, 6, 2, 9, 9, 3, 18, 6, 14, 22, 4, and 27. The 14, 18, 22, and 27 are now “stored” for 24 hours. Later, when making a Skill Roll, one of his dice explodes. He decides to immediately replace that die with the 18 he rolled earlier. Later, when casting an important spell, he decides to spend a Void Point. Instead of the usual effects, he uses his 27, adding it to the roll.

You may only cast this spell once a week.

This is a First Tier Void Spell, known only to those who have earned the Master of Void’s trust.

MASTERS OF MAGIC

THE BROTHERHOOD
OF SHINSEI

Come closer my child. Does this wrinkled face hold so much terror for you? Ah, yes. You are curious as to how I defeated the bandits. They were so numerous, with weapons and armor honed through years of use. Your father and uncles and the other men of the village could do nothing, although they clearly wished they could. And yet I defeated them with nothing more than this stick. How is it that such an old man could wield such great strength?

I am not such a strong man, child. I do not carry the burden of your father, who must think of your welfare and swallow his pride to keep you safe. I do not embrace the duties of the samurai, who must protect this Empire and will now see to it that the bandits face justice. I do not have the courage of a little girl who left her bed in the middle of the night to seek out such a strange and frightening figure. My path is unfettered by these concerns... concerns which others much braver and stronger than I must take up lest the order of Heaven crumble. I have detached myself from the world of objects, of things, of fears and bravery, of bandits and farmers, of little girls asking questions. In many ways, I lack the courage to participate in such a world.

But I have seen things in my journeys, and I believe now that I am beginning to understand what they mean. I see how we are all connected, like leaves in a great tree. I see the pattern of what has come before and the way it guides us to the things that will come again. I see how pain and suffering can expand like ripples in a pond, and how peace and Enlightenment can calm those troubled waters. That Enlightenment has given me clarity of mind and body. It has allowed me to know myself

and know those around me. It lets me move to a spot where the blade will not fall and place this staff at a point where it will knock a man from his horse. I can do these things not because it pleases me to do so, but because my grasp of the universe — feeble though it is — permits me to see how it may be done.

I take no joy in inflicting pain, child, even to men like those bandits. Were the Fortunes willing, I might have just continued on my way, unmolested and untouched. But they too are part of the pattern I see, and they have a role to play as well. They were not so different than you once — scared children, wounded by the world, who learned to pass their pain onto others. Their actions have ignited anger in you: at them, at your father who would not stop them, at the samurai who did not arrive until long after they were beaten. But that anger can be healed, and the lessons it teaches can lead to deeper and stronger truths — truths that can guide you to a better path, to show a scared girl how to become an honorable woman, to help you resolve never to treat others the way you and your village have been treated. You can learn these things if you want, child. All you need do is listen.

The History of the Brotherhood of Shinsei

The Brotherhood of Shinsei traces its origins to the first war against Fu Leng. Before that, Rokugani engaged in a primitive form of spirit worship, venerating the Fortunes in crude and sometimes savage rites designed to curry the kami's favor. The fall of the Kami began to change that, but it wasn't until the arrival of Shinsei himself in the year 42 LC that modern Rokugani religion truly began to take

shape. A timeline of pertinent events in its history can be found below.

SHINSEI APPEARS: YEAR 42

Shinsei arrives in the Emperor's court and reveals a way of defeating the encroaching armies of darkness. He and the Emperor speak for many hours — their words recorded by the Kami Shiba — before departing with the first Seven Thunders to destroy Fu Leng. The recorded text of their conversation becomes the basis for the Tao of Shinsei.

SHINSEI'S FOLLOWERS UNITE: YEAR 44

Those who have studied Shinsei's teachings meet at the village of Shinsei no Sumai, and agree to compile their various texts into a single work. They blend Shiba's transcriptions with anecdotes and stories pertaining to Shinsei into the Tao, forming what will become the enduring foundation of Rokugani religion. The gathering agrees to return to the village once every ten years at an event known as the Great Convocation in order to study and revise the newly created Tao.

FORTUNE WORSHIP COMBINED WITH SHINSEISM: YEAR 48

Emperor Hantei Genji declares that worship of the Fortunes — which has continued in the years since Shinsei's arrival — is not incompatible with the Tao of Shinsei. Both are declared the official religions of the Empire. Extremists on both sides initially resist the edict, but most see the wisdom of the Emperor's decree, and Fortune worship is soon blended with the teachings of Shinsei. Subsequent scholars believe that the act healed numerous social rifts that had only begun to appear, and may have prevented the eventual fracturing of the Empire.

THE DISCOVERY OF UIKKU: YEAR 72

A raving child appears in the lands of the Phoenix, endowed with the ability to foretell the future. Phoenix Clan shugenja spirit him away to their most sacred temple, where their healers work to soothe his troubled mind. Although many of his predictions are dominated by visions of death and insanity, they also entail some startling insight into the teachings of Shinsei. Phoenix scribes record



Uikku's predictions for the next eighteen years, until he finally perishes from a fever. The accuracy of his vision proves astonishing in the centuries which follow.

THE EXECUTION OF TOGASHI KAZE: YEAR 251

Togashi Kaze, a tattooed man belonging to the Dragon Clan, is executed after refusing to display his martial arts prowess for the Imperial Court. Kaze claimed that his techniques were not intended for the samurai caste, but could only be taught to the peasantry as a way of defending themselves. The samurai had their daisho, he proclaimed, but the peasants had only their hands and farming tools. To show a samurai such a fighting style would be an insult both to the bushi and to the peasants for whom it was intended. Outraged at the ize zumi's refusal to obey his command, the Emperor has Kaze executed, but his methods survive and now form the basis of the Brotherhood's martial arts.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE ASAHINA FAMILY: YEAR 353

Isawa Asahina of the Phoenix Clan renounces his heritage and joins the Crane to atone for the death of a valiant samurai-ko at his hands. The Brotherhood of Shinsei flourishes in the Crane lands in the years following his arrival.

THE BREAKING OF THE GOZOKU ALLIANCE: YEAR 435

The Gozoku — a conspiracy of Crane, Scorpion, and Phoenix nobles — acted as the de facto rulers of Rokugan for many years, with the Emperor serving only as a puppet. Realizing that the Brotherhood of Shinsei lies beyond the Gozoku's control, the Emperor demands that they serve as his spies. When the Gozoku retaliate, the Brotherhood openly defies their power. Many monks are killed and numerous temples destroyed, an act that prompts open rebellion by Rokugan's peasantry. The Gozoku's power is quickly shattered and a new Emperor takes the throne unfettered by their machinations.

THE CREATION OF THE TEMPLE OF LOST GODS: YEAR 597

The Steel Chrysanthemum, Emperor Hantei XVI, abuses his authority over the Brotherhood of Shinsei by elevating unfit mortals to the status of Fortunes. His successor reverses many of these abuses, allowing the Brotherhood to

ignore these unfit or "lost" Fortunes. A small temple in the Phoenix lands pays homage to their memory, but mention of their names rarely appears anywhere else.

YOGO JUNZO ATTACKS THE BROTHERHOOD: YEAR 1126

In the midst of the Clan War, the undead Scorpion shugenja Yogo Junzo launches an assault on all centers of learning in Rokugan. Oni and other Shadowlands creatures ravage monasteries across the Empire, burning many to the ground and destroying countless precious manuscripts in the process. Faced with the extinction of their order, the Brotherhood enters the Clan War with the intention of defeating the forces of the Shadowlands.

THE SECOND DAY OF THUNDER AND THE CREATION OF THE NEW TAO: YEAR 1128

Shinsei's descendent, the Hooded Ronin, leads the second Seven Thunders against a reborn Fu Leng. Thanks to their efforts and aided in part by Brotherhood monks fighting on the side of the Great Clans, the army of the Shadowlands is defeated. Following the battle, the Hooded Ronin engages in lengthy discussions with the new Emperor, Toturi I. Like the conversation that preceded the first Day of Thunder, this one is recorded by a Phoenix scribe. The text becomes the New Tao, revered by the Brotherhood as a companion to the original Tao.

THE TRUE TAO IS LOST: YEAR 1132

The secret society known as the Kolat steals the original copy of the Tao of Shinsei, along with the new Tao, from their location in Ootosan Uchi. They hope to protect it from the Lying Darkness, but the Shadow is able to consume half of the text, presumably destroying it forever. The Crane Clan eventually takes custody of the remaining half.

THE TRUE TAO IS RECOVERED: YEAR 1158

A group of Scorpion shugenja inadvertently conjure the lost half of the true Tao while seeking to ascertain the fate of the Lying Darkness. Their Daimyo restores the text to the Brotherhood, while exacting a promise that the Brotherhood will return the favor someday by performing a task for his Clan.

THE WAR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH: YEAR 1160

A reincarnated Fu Leng launches a war against the Gates of Heaven itself. Though he is again defeated, his min-

ions claim the lives of numerous Fortunes and spirits. The Brotherhood reels from such devastating losses, and many monks retreat to their monasteries to contemplate their damaged faith.

Origins and Purpose

The Brotherhood of Shinsei traces its roots back to the first Day of Thunder, as the Emperor Hantei and his brethren prepared for a final, doomed battle against the forces of Fu Leng. A little man appeared before the Emperor, promising to reveal the means to defeat the Shadowlands. Guards moved to intercept him, but he effortlessly tossed them aside — defeating them without appearing to do them any lasting harm. Amazed, the Emperor asked him his name. He replied, “Shinsei,” which means “new way.”

The two spent the rest of the evening deep in conversation. The little man spoke of a grand purpose of the universe, and of a reality formed by the harmonious union of the Five Rings. He pointed out a path to wisdom, entailing humility and generosity which recognized that even the smallest and weakest played a role in a larger pattern. Their words were dutifully recorded by Hantei’s brother Shiba and became the basis for the Brotherhood’s wisdom.

Legends ascribe other lectures delivered by Shinsei, both to the great Kami and to the people of Rokugan. It is difficult to say how many of them are true, but the wisdom contained in them is undeniable. Shinsei eventually departed with the Seven Thunders to defeat Fu Leng, but his teachings remained behind. Cherished by the Emperor and buoyed by word of what had taken place, they soon found new adherents throughout the Empire, who dedicated themselves to living by their truths.

But this was in the early days of the Empire and with no spiritual leader to take Shinsei’s place, his lessons were soon splintered by dozens of different variations. Some preached strict adherence to the monastic life, as dictated by the little teacher’s “Path of Purification.” Others admonished walking the land and protecting the weak from harm, including oppression by the growing class of samurai. Almost as soon as it began, the new spiritual movement threatened to fragment under a cacophony of opposing interpretations.

Realizing the danger, the major followers of Shinsei agreed to meet in order to unify his teachings. Just two short years after the Little Teacher disappeared, Rokugan’s monks gathered at the village of Shinsei no Sumai Mura. They emerged with the Tao of Shinsei, a collection of Shiba’s transcriptions, reinterpreted folk tales, and lectures purportedly given by Shinsei himself.

The Tao was further modified following the second Day of Thunder in 1128. The Hooded Ronin, who revealed himself to be the direct descendant of Shinsei during the fighting, spent an evening in conversation with the new Emperor Toturi I. As before, a Phoenix scribe recorded their words, and the Brotherhood embraced the resulting text as the New Tao. It now holds a status equal to that of the original Tao, and together the two texts have become known as the True Tao.

With it as a religious centerpiece, the Brotherhood at last took shape, and their teachings quickly spread to all corners of the Empire. Numerous smaller movements sprung up beneath that umbrella — orders whose interpretation of the Tao varied wildly, and some who incorporated older religious traditions into their teachings as well — but all of them embraced the fundamental truths that they believe that text represents.

The Brotherhood’s precise traditions and methods vary from sect to sect, even from individual monk to individual monk. Some sects adhere to very strict readings of the Tao, and do not broach any opposition among the monks in their ranks. Others see Shinsei’s teachings more as guidelines than rules, and encourage individuals to develop their own concepts of wisdom. Shinseism becomes even more diverse when it moves beyond the walls of the monastery. Some Rokugani have no use for it at all, following its teachings in only the vaguest and most perfunctory ways. Others pick and choose which tenets work best in their lives. A Lion samurai, for example, may embrace Shinsei’s notion of the impermanence of the world, accepting that death is merely another form of change and thus eliminating any fear that battle may hold for him. At the same time, he may scoff at the notion that he must shave his head and join a monastery at age 40 — stipulated in the Tao, but often ignored by samurai.

The monks themselves help further this centrifugal tendency by refusing to preach or evangelize. Though many sects believe that education of the masses is important, blind dogma is viewed as anathema to their beliefs. Shinseism has no formal strictures and even fewer command-

ments or rules. Most of it consists of parables and fables, the lessons of which can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Infinite variety is a further tenet of the faith, and the Brotherhood knows that one man's path to wisdom many not necessarily work for another. Many of them believe that diversity of opinion can translate into strength, and keep the Order from falling into calcification and irrelevance. Flexibility in method and interpretation is part of what has allowed their teachings to thrive for so many centuries.

The Four Vows

Despite that, a few clear tenets run through every sect of Shinsei's Brotherhood. Besides the Tao itself, they are the only truly unifying factors between individual sects, and form the closest thing to a concrete ethos that the monks of the Brotherhood will ever espouse. Every monk takes a series of vows upon joining his particular sect. Some sects espouse many more vows than others. No vow is permanent; adherence to them depends on the individual who makes them, and may ebb and flow during his journey to Enlightenment. To adhere to them unbendingly is not a part of the core of Shinsei's beliefs. But several of them — known collectively as the Four Vows — appear in some form or another within every monastery in Rokugan. No matter what their stripe, every Brotherhood monk has taken these vows, and strives to embody them in his thoughts and deeds as best he can.

Enlightenment. The principal goal of every Brotherhood monk is to attain perfect Enlightenment — total understanding of Shinsei's teachings and, by extension, the purpose of the universe itself. Such an endeavor can never be entirely achieved, at least not within this lifetime. The human mind is too flawed, its perception of the world too clouded to truly reach such an exalted state. But Shinsei taught that the journey matters far more than the destination, and in that spirit, the monks of the Brotherhood seek to free themselves from the bonds of their own spiritual ignorance.

Like every other aspect of the Brotherhood, the precise method of doing so is open to interpretation. Study of the Tao, communing with the spirits, recitation of certain chants... every sect has their own methodology, and individual monks adhere to them only insofar as they prove helpful. Most sects realize that each man has his own path to Enlightenment and that the Tao can merely show him the way. How and what he might be depends on the

man — and more importantly, on the mental and spiritual state of that man at any given time. Enlightenment is no more permanent than any other part of the universe, and once it has been gained, it can be lost again in the blink of an eye. Accordingly, most monastic orders cloister themselves away from the distractions of the outside world. It allows them to focus solely on their inner path and prevents them from becoming distracted by other concerns.

Education. Hand in hand with Enlightenment comes the notion of understanding, both of this world and of the Celestial Heavens. A monk who seeks to know what Shinsei knew must embrace the totality of the Little Teacher's wisdom, which means striving to learn as he did. Learning is a tool for the improvement of the self. It helps to expand all human potential and to move the reality of what is into the possibility of what could be. A man who learns something new has increased the limits of his universe, and as knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next, the repository of human experience moves towards the infinite. Education is not the same as Enlightenment, but in many cases, it holds the key to the first steps on that path.

For some sects, education means a strict focus on the Tao itself. The inner workings of the universe are contained within its words, and if a monk becomes suitably familiar with them, then he can begin to understand their profundity. These sects hold the Tao as a perfect unity in and of itself; outside influences can only muddle the lessons it holds. Their monks often remain in solitude, using the isolation of the monastery to focus their mind on Shinsei's wisdom.

Most sects, however, believe that transcending this world comes in part through understanding as much of it as possible. Their monasteries hold vast numbers of scrolls within their walls, cataloguing information so that others may benefit from the wisdom of the past. Members spend long hours studying them, debating them, and adding to them as much as they can. They seek out histories, political treatises, grimoires of Shadowlands denizens, farming guides, and plays and poetry in addition to spiritual texts — in other words, they value anything that constitutes useful knowledge of the world around them.

Most importantly, these monks believe that learning is a lifelong process. There are always new things to discover and even the most knowledgeable scholar can find fresh topics to explore. Simple peasants can show them wisdom that no Daimyo would ever understand, and the

movements of the birds in the trees hold invaluable lessons for those who would hear them. Though they spend much time in their monasteries, these monks also see the need to travel the roads of Rokugan — not necessarily to participate in the drama of life unfolding before them, but to observe and gain what wisdom they can. Many of them chide those who refer to them as “sensei” preferring to be referred to as “students” or just men. They frequently cite a favored passage in the Tao as justification for their objections: “A fool is a man who believes himself wise, while the wise man knows that he is a fool.”

Yet at the same time, teaching becomes part of their calling as well, entwined with the vow of education. Wisdom is meaningless if it is not passed on, and knowledge only holds value if it can be shared. Brotherhood monks endeavor to instruct those who come to their monastery for guidance, and also to speak of the wisdom of Shinsei to those whom they meet in their travels. This is not the same as evangelizing, however, nor is it teaching in the traditional sense. The Tao is filled with parables and stories the wisdom of which is intended to be interpreted by the listener, not enforced by the teller. Brotherhood monks use them to provide the tools for their audience — to allow them to learn for themselves rather than simply accept someone else’s doctrine. Teaching by example is another favored method, as the monks seek to embody the Tao’s lessons and hope that others draw inspiration from them.

In exchange, they often ask for lessons in return. Those listening to a monk’s stories in the village square may be surprised when he turns and asks them about the seasonal cycle of rice, or the method by which they created their farming tools. Samurai and Daimyo may be asked about their experiences and duties, while courtiers may be asked to explain the reasoning behind the latest peace treaty between Clans. Many monks accept such information as “payment” for their advice, eschewing the material in order to expand their body of knowledge. They raise such questions with due humility, deferring to even the lowliest commoner in his particular field of expertise. Sometimes, they write down what they hear, but not always. It is enough simply to hear what is being said, for doing so only expands the borders of who they hope to be.

Pacifism. One tenet of the Brotherhood that does not waver from sect to sect is the respect for all living things. Every being on the planet holds a purpose in the Celestial

Heavens and to kill even a fly is to mar that divine pattern. All monks of the Brotherhood have a duty to preserve life, not only through their own actions, but by interceding in the actions of others.

Of course even here, the rules are not firm, and individual orders disagree fiercely on what it means to sanctify all life. Many monks believe that it means strict adherence to nonviolence, even if their own lives are threatened. They refrain from physical confrontation, they refuse to consume any meat, and they even sweep the ground ahead of them lest they inadvertently trod upon a passing insect. When interacting with the outside world, they take on the role of diplomats, seeking to resolve potential crises before they become violent. In the most extreme cases, they will place themselves directly in harm’s way in an effort to prevent bloodshed. Rokugani history contains many instances of monks stepping between warriors on the verge of a duel, or armies charging each other on a battlefield. Often, the monks gain nothing more than a principled death, but by their example, they hope to teach others the folly of violence.

Some within the Brotherhood, however, believe that such actions serve no purpose beyond adding another body to the pile. They maintain that a monk who throws away his life in such a manner cuts short his own potential as a force for good, and that pacifism that achieves nothing defeats the very ethos for which it stands. They believe that monks should intercede when they have due cause: to meet force with force and to return that which is given in equal measure. They have taken a vow never to kill, certainly, but properly applied use of force can disable without killing quite easily. Violence is suffering, as Shinsei teaches, but if applied correctly, suffering can impart lessons of its own. It is from this belief that the tradition of sohei have emerged, as warrior-monks skilled in martial arts seek to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Then there is the tricky question of the Shadowlands. Do the forces of Fu Leng represent living creatures, or are they utter abominations — perversions of the design of Heaven? A number of prominent orders believe that their vows do not apply when dealing with the Shadowlands, and indeed that destroying them is necessary to restoring the balance of the universe. They cite the example of Shinsei himself, who led the original Seven Thunders to destroy Fu Leng, and to more recent examples such as undead samurai whose bodies are clearly no longer among the living. Members of the Order of Osano-Wo are the

strongest adherents of such beliefs, but a number of other monastic sects share their basic philosophy.

A few orders, however, maintain that even the Shadowlands serves a purpose in the Celestial Order, and that destroying its denizens causes no less damage than destroying any other living thing. While they don't exactly hurl themselves in front of the Kaiu Wall in an effort to halt the bloodshed, they do advocate a way of "curing" the Shadowlands Taint rather than mindlessly wiping out every creature afflicted with it. Strangely enough, some of them will consult with the Kuni Witch Hunters at times, seeking answers for the cause of the Taint in hopes of eventually reversing it. Most, however, simply tend to their business and leave the Shadowlands alone, limiting their beliefs to rhetorical argument rather than practical application.

Rejection of the Material. The fourth and final vow taken by all Brotherhood monks concerns itself with the nature

of reality, and the transience that defines all life. Enlightenment lies in the spiritual, not the material, and those who allow base concerns to govern their lives become hopelessly entangled in deceit and illusion. In order to free themselves from such a fate, the Brotherhood must renounce all ties with the material world. They take vows of poverty, refusing to hold truck with the corruption that money brings. They refuse to engage in political issues, lest the need for power lead them astray. They renounce sins of the flesh through vows of chastity, and eliminate base pleasures, such as rich food and alcohol from their lives. They dress in simple robes and eat only the basics. In some cases they grow their own food. Thus do they hope to detach themselves from the prison of their senses and truly seek the spiritual divinity that Shinsei promised.



Differences arise in what truly constitutes a rejection of the material, and how that rejection can serve to inspire others. Some sects maintain that total separation is the only true path. They build their monasteries deep in the wilderness or close their doors to any save those seeking true Enlightenment. A few members go much farther than that, retreating into total isolation so that nothing can distract them from their meditations, or taking vows of silence and refusing to even speak to their fellows. Such sects will usually select one or two monks to serve as intermediaries — collecting what supplies they need and speaking to the local magistrate or Daimyo when circumstances necessitate it — but otherwise they become islands unto themselves, neither venturing forth from their monasteries nor allowing others to intrude upon their serenity.

Other sects take a less rigid approach to the vow — out of necessity if nothing else. Depending upon their approach to the other three vows, interaction with the material world may be unavoidable. How are they to protect the innocent, for instance, if they remain cloistered behind walls? How can they lead by example if they allow no one to see that example? The knowledge they learn is useless unless they can share it, and sharing by default means engagement in the outside world.

Such monks believe just as fervently in the renunciation of the material as their more rigid brethren do. They simply disagree on what constitutes “renunciation.” Chastity and poverty are fairly universal, but beyond that, it becomes almost a question for individual monks. Some will consume sake or rich food with relish, tell dirty jokes, and embrace the joyful side of life. Others will speak to the wealthy and powerful on behalf of the peasantry, urging funds for public projects to ease suffering in their districts. They are the most likely to be found wandering the roads of Rokugan, refusing to stay locked up in some dusty monk’s cell. They also are the most likely to espouse leading by example, and maintain their vows as a demonstration to others rather than a self-contained path. In so doing, they believe, they can bring all of Rokugan closer to Enlightenment, a path which Shinsei must surely approve.

And exceptions to one’s belief in isolation from worldly matters have always arisen, even in the most cloistered sects. During the Clan War, the Brotherhood recognized the threat that Fu Leng posed to its very existence, and resolved to fight against him. By necessity, the monks participated in the political process, and in some minds

sullied their hands by helping to place Emperor Toturi I on the throne. The War in Tengoku also had a profound impact upon the Brotherhood, demonstrating that even the spirit world maintained inexorable ties to the material one. A renunciation of earthly illusions is essential for the Brotherhood, but as always, it is left to the individual to determine exactly how it applies.

Major Sects

The Brotherhood of Shinsei is composed of many different orders, each one adhering to a specific interpretation of the Tao. Some have many different monasteries holding membership, though most have just one or two. The orders can be subdivided into six basic sects, which comprise the vast majority of the Brotherhood. A few collections of minor sects, referred to collectively as mikokami, constitute the rest. While individual orders represent the overall organization of the Brotherhood, sects refer to specific philosophies which cross over between orders. Some orders may adhere to more than one sect — for example, the Order of Osano-Wo is both a Fortunist sect and a sohei sect — but such crossovers are rare. A brief description of each sect can be found below. The titles used are casual rather than official; formally, each Order is referred to by its own name.

Fortunists

Though technically a member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the followers of the Seven Fortunes have always walked a path of their own. In the days before the fall of the Kami, primitive Rokugani worshipped the unseen forces around them: spirits and supernatural entities which came to be known as the Fortunes. Shinsei’s arrival changed all of that, but the older ways were never completely discarded and in the year 48, the Emperor decreed that those ways were compatible with the new teachings of Shinsei. Hundreds of years later, the two religions have become virtually inseparable, but there are still many monks who believe that the Fortunes hold more wisdom than the Shinsei’s teachings. They pay homage to the Little Teacher, but their true faith lies in entirely different entities.

There are actually thousands of Fortunes within Rokugan's mythology, each controlling a different aspect of life. There are Fortunes for marriage, for rice, for sea voyages and poetry. There are Fortunes attached to specific villages or towns, Fortunes governing individual aspects of court, and Fortunes dedicated to a particular bush or tree. Above them all stand the seven Great Fortunes, whose actions govern the universe, and above them stood Lady Sun and Lord Moon, creators of them all.

Monks with Fortunist proclivities view themselves as small parts of the grand pattern the Fortunes represent. They tend to view Enlightenment in strictly architectural terms, as a matter of understanding the Celestial Order as an intricate and deliberate design. One's place within it is a crucial part of that design, and no more subject to change than that of a beam or pillar in a building. Other Brotherhood monks understand the importance of harmony and order as part of the Will of Heaven, but Fortunist monks concern themselves far less with human behavior than do more traditional Shinseist monks. Their interest lies in forces beyond human ken.

Furthermore, they place more emphasis on structure and order than most of their brethren. The cosmos is a hierarchy, and through that hierarchy, it performs its wonders. So too, is human society divided into ranks — an infinitesimally smaller variation of the same grand order. To defile that order is to threaten the structure of the universe itself. Thus, everyone must know their place and understand the importance of their purpose, however minor it appears to be. The monks themselves are organized into an incredibly complex series of ranks, starting with the largest temples and working their way down to the smallest shrine. Every monk understands who ranks above them and who below. Trifling with that organization is tantamount to blasphemy in their eyes.

Within that structure, the monks pay homage to the various Fortunes and the blessings they bestow upon Rokugan. Shrines exist to every Fortune, though many are very small and number the least popular Minor Fortunes may have no more than one or two in the entire Empire. Monks may choose to take up the duties of a particular Fortune of their choice, or they are assigned a temple or shrine by their superior if they have no particular preference. Their lives are cloistered and entail little contact with the outside world. Their routine includes prayers and offerings, daily meditation, maintenance and care of the shrines and temples of the order, and deep study of

the structure of the cosmos. They never become involved in outside affairs, for to do so is to disrupt the universe's plans. But they will offer compassionate advice to all those who come to them. Violence is universally abhorred, save by sects dedicated to martial Fortunes such as Osano-Wo and Bishamon.

In many ways, this is no different than other parts of the Brotherhood. The key distinction lies in their disposition towards Shinsei and his teachings. Fortunists respect the wisdom of the Little Teacher, but they do not believe that his is the only, or even the most important, path to wisdom. They view the Tao as useful but imperfect — like many human constructions — and apply it only in those cases where they believe it serves a purpose. Naturally, this causes friction with other members of the Brotherhood, who view Shinsei's wisdom as sacrosanct. But the two sides are so similar in so many different ways — and their ultimate ethos is practically identical — so that such disagreements have been limited to esoteric debate.

Lotus

Orders belonging to the Lotus sect place a great deal of relevance on purity and simplicity. They enunciate their philosophy through eight "petals," which they believe constitute the essence of Shinsei: diligence, forgiveness, purity, compassion, wisdom, Enlightenment, the Tao, and the Brotherhood itself. They rarely emerge from their monasteries and they are the sect most likely to renounce interaction with the outside world. Instead, they seek understanding of the eight petals through the Ring of Void: specifically through the form of meditation known as *zanjii* (no mind). They also participate in chants and sacred utterances, believing that Enlightenment can arise through the perfect vocal manifestation of a Void state.

Questioners

While Lotus orders keep themselves separate and distant from the world, orders belonging to this sect seek a vigorous engagement with the people of Rokugan. They value their vows of poverty and view the world as a transient illusion, but they also see the need to spread Enlightenment to others — helping them find their own path just as the monks seek theirs. They are skilled teachers and renowned for conveying Shinsei's wisdom in stories and fables. Very few of them have any formal monasteries to call their own. Instead, they wander the roads of Rokugan in

search of Enlightenment, and depend upon the kindness of others for food and shelter. They place an exceptional focus on the transient nature of the world, and constantly emphasize that nothing on this earth is permanent.

To that end, they are known to challenge existing preconceptions in hopes of getting those who hold them to look at the world through fresh eyes. Sometimes, this means couching a tale of Shinsei in such a way as to point out some shortcoming in the listener. Other times, it entails elaborate pranks of a friendly nature or the embrace of a custom which the locals hold as taboo. Questioner monks sometimes get into trouble for such activities, but their exalted state among Rokugani allows them to wriggle out of any serious implications... and hopefully help those affected see things in a way they might never have considered otherwise.

Shintao

Shintao monks are by far the largest sect within the Brotherhood, and the archetype for what Rokugani think of as "monks." They believe that the concept of self is the largest impediment to Enlightenment, and that discarding one's identity leads to perfection of the soul. They ask nothing for themselves, and instead direct their efforts to-

wards the aid and comfort of others. They refrain from advising others, for to do so is to express an opinion, and opinions are an expression of self-regard. Instead, they do all they can to ease suffering in the outside world — serving as healers, diplomats, and providers of comfort to any who need them. Their words come not as solutions to tangible problems, but to soothe the troubled souls of any listeners, intended to convey peace and understanding to all who hear them.

While they embrace the need to separate themselves from the outside world, they also believe that excessive seclusion is a further form of ego. How can they renounce their sense of self if they ignore the remainder of the Empire who may need them? Their ethos thus walks a fine line between engagement and isolation, between providing whatever aid they can to Rokugan and avoiding the myriad entanglements that may lead them off of their path.

They engage in frequent meditation, either alone or in regular gatherings. Many of them renounce all but the simplest of names, preferring to be known as "monk" or "brother" rather than anything more unique. The accumulation of knowledge holds especial importance for them, and the Brotherhood's vast libraries of scrolls be-



long largely to Shintao orders, which they diligently pore over as part of their daily routine. They add to those repositories whenever they can, but always in a manner that furthers their philosophy. Even the rarest piece of arcane learning is still one scroll among thousands. By acknowledging that, they feel that they can understand how small are their own contributions to the world, and yet how they can add up to something far larger when put together.

Sohei

While the other sects in the Brotherhood sprang forth largely from philosophical reasoning, the sohei are the only ones who came about from a sense of practicality. The Brotherhood universally embraces pacifism as a basic tenet of Shinsei's teachings. Its members have universally pledged to never take a human life. But the remainder of Rokugan is not so Enlightened and there are those who would do harm to the temples and monasteries if they are not protected. The Brotherhood tradition of martial arts grew out of this necessity — a means of defense that could disable without killing, and which eschewed weapons in favor of physical perfection. The sohei are the chief practitioners of these arts, warrior monks who will defend their fellows when all peaceful options have been lost.

The sohei view themselves as the chief intermediaries between the Brotherhood and the rest of Rokugan — a permeable wall that allows their brethren to maintain their peaceful seclusion without fear of the outside world. In that sense, they resemble the Crab Clan guarding Rokugan's border. Indeed many sohei monks were former samurai of the Crab and their most prominent order — the Order of Osano-Wo — makes its home in Crab territory.

But they believe in more than simply acting as defenders. Their skills in unarmed combat blossom from adherence to Shinsei's teachings and from the belief that purity of the mind can be achieved through purity of the body. Their physical regimen is intended to cleanse themselves of external distractions, focusing on the rhythms and sensations of their physical form and through it, the status of their soul. Their skills are thus a matter of intense spirituality, used not only for practical purposes, but to move them further towards Enlightenment.

Many of them wander the lands of Rokugan, seeking to protect those who cannot protect themselves. This they view as an extension of their faith as well — a unique form of compassion that acknowledges the practical necessities of life while demonstrating a better way of re-

solving conflicts. Some Sohei orders lack monasteries the same way Questioning orders do, content instead to either walk the earth in search of Enlightenment, or attach themselves to more pacifistic orders as a way of keeping their sanctuaries safe.

Yamabushi

Yamabushi translates literally as "mountain men," and indeed many of the orders which constitute it make their home along the Spine of the World Mountains. They seek Enlightenment through embrace of the natural world, observing Shinsei's wisdom in the growth of the trees, the babbling of the streams, and the habits of wild animals. The Five Elements are most purely embodied in the world around them, and they renounce human civilization as the sum of all the imperfections they wish to escape.

Most yamabushi sects organize themselves into bands of five, with one monk in each band embodying one of the Five Rings. Few of them gather in groups larger than fifteen or twenty and a number of them abandon their fellows entirely to live as solitary hermits. Their temples are built out of the simplest materials — often little more than thatch huts — and many are not even buildings at all, but rough camps established within caves or similar natural formations. The monks incorporate feng shui into their designs so as to blend in as seamlessly as possible with the surrounding territory.

Their connection to the Elements can be seen both in their Kiho powers — often more intense than those of other sects — and in their embrace of natural phenomenon. They have been known to meditate in howling monsoons, or stand balanced for hours atop mountain rock formations. They swim in near-freezing rivers and their rapport with wildlife is so profound that deer and similar creatures routinely approach them without fear. That understanding often accompanies deliberate separation from the remainder of Rokugan. Yamabushi monks rarely interact with outsiders and while their faith incorporates compassion for all living things, those who deal with them often describe them as gruff or non-responsive. They may go years without uttering a word, even among those who haven't taken vows of silence. But through their devotion, they believe that the mysteries of the Five Rings become clear, and other orders often comment on their unique insight into many of the Brotherhood's most profound mysteries.

Mikokami

Mikokami is a term for lesser Fortunes, but it also refers to the numerous tiny Brotherhood orders which do not belong to any of the five other sects. Though they all embrace Shinsei as a path to truth, their particular tenets are too obscure or extreme to gain a larger foothold. There are dozens of them scattered across Rokugan, most constituting no more than one or two monasteries as most. To call their teachings disparate is an understatement: They run the length and breadth of Shinseism, ranging from ramshackle organizations whose members are barely recognizable as monks to fastidious adherents to the tiniest perceived detail of the Little Teacher's wisdom. Many of them cluster around the worship of a specific Fortune. Their temples are dedicated solely to that Fortune and their members believe that Enlightenment comes through following his or her example. Others worship ancient nature spirits, local kami, or even gaijin gods whom they believe were speaking through Shinsei. But all of them have been welcomed into the Brotherhood, if for no other reason than to embrace Shinsei's belief in infinite variety.

The largest organization among them is the Shinmaki, a curious branch of Shinseism that reveres the Little Teacher even as it eschews the Tao itself. In their beliefs, Shinsei's wisdom lies in the folk tales and apocryphal stories that sprung up around him. The Tao is useful to them, but they do not consider it to be a sacred text. Rather, they maintain that filtering his teachings through the diverse voices of alternate texts will allow his true wisdom to come forth. They often challenge other monks with their refusal to accept the Tao's word, pointing out tiny differences in various versions of the text, and arguing that those differences hold the key to true Enlightenment. Their rituals are extraordinarily complex — sometimes taking hours to perform — and they consider ancestor and Fortune worship almost as important as following Shinsei's teachings. Nevertheless, they still belong to the Order, and while their particulars may be odd, much of their behavior follows that of more mainstream Brotherhood monks.

Temples

The following are three of the most important Brotherhood of Shinsei temples. Some of them have been covered briefly in earlier texts; their description here is intended to fill in any missing holes in their appearance or function.

The Ten Thousand Temples

One of the Brotherhood's largest and best-known temples is also one of the newest. It was constructed in Toshi Ranbo, Rokugan's new capital, as part of the rebuilding efforts that began after the destruction of Otsan Uchi. Several older temples exist within the city as well, but this one was intended to serve as an umbrella above them all, and a means of symbolizing the Empire's rebirth.

It is surrounded by stone walls built in part from bricks that were salvaged from Otsan Uchi. Monks of the order brought other bricks from destroyed buildings throughout the Empire to form the rest — pieces of sundered Kaiu Wall, Mantis lighthouses destroyed by monsoons, ruined Scorpion hideouts, and stalwart Lion fortresses. Each piece represents the violence and destructiveness still seething within the Empire, with the wall itself demonstrating that those divisions can be healed through renewal and rebirth.

Courtiers routinely visit the Ten Thousand Temples, as did Toturi III and the Shogun Kaneka from time to time. Though most of the city's nobility have their own shrines at which to pray, the Temple belongs to the Brotherhood, and decorum requires even the most controlling aristocrat to make an appearance there every now and again. When the Emperor wishes to consult the monks, he travels to the Temple as a display of courtesy, rather than asking any of the monks to come to him. Representatives of the Emperor attend all public ceremonies and festivals at the Temple, and a monk from the Temple similarly attends all functions in the Imperial Palace.

Because it serves the elite of Rokugan's ruling class, the Temple's décor walks a delicate line between the extravagant and the humble. It must reflect the aesthetics of the Court and yet still maintain the monks' vow of extreme poverty. Much of it was donated by artisans made wealthy by Imperial favor, allowing the Brotherhood to

keep itself pure while still meeting the expectations of the Imperial City. Beyond the wall, the Temple itself is built of delicate wood: finely constructed, but adhering to the simplicity advocated by Shinsei. Rock gardens and bonsai trees mark its outer courtyards, as do the stunning number of shrines for which the Temple is named. Each is tended by an individual monk whose sole purpose lies in its maintenance. The shrines comprise the entirety of Rokugan's pantheon of Fortunes — one each for every Fortune worshipped in the Empire.

The Temple interiors are cool and inviting, tastefully decorated with murals depicting important events in Shinsei's life. Rooms are dedicated to the virtues of each of the Great Clans (excluding the Spider), as well as many minor ones who receive equal attention in the Brotherhood's eyes. The overall motif is a combination of gold and sky blue — the colors of the Lion and the Crane who warred incessantly over Toshi Ranbo until finally unifying the city beneath the Emperor.

The monks who live within the Temple must walk a similarly delicate line between engagement in the world outside and vigilance to their vows. The Imperial City is a hotbed of power politics, and numerous forces on every side would cheerfully use the Order as cat's paws if they felt they could get away with it, but so too does the Order have the ability to perform much good here. They can serve as diplomats and negotiators between rival factions, advise against rash actions which may lead to violence between the Clans, and point otherwise self-serving men towards the greater good that the monks are here to promote. To turn their back on such duties would cause great harm to the Empire, and all but the most rigid orders in the Brotherhood believe that the Temple's presence in the Toshi Ranbo is an absolute necessity.

Monks who serve here are chosen extremely carefully. Their piety must be beyond reproach, and yet they must be wise to the ways of the world lest they become ensnared in some cunningly laid political trap. They must be wise and compassionate without being blinded to the realities of the world, and preach Shinsei's wisdom in an atmosphere where practical politics are the greatest influence on people and events. They must be above the fray without abandoning it and provide advice and counsel without succumbing to undue sympathy.

Few monks are so Enlightened as to be able to take on such tasks, and many of those who are refuse to en-

ter such a snake's pit willingly. Those who serve here are among the most patient, insightful, and compassionate monks in the Brotherhood, from the Temple masters right down to the lowliest gardener. Many of them originally came from the Four Temples in Otosan Uchi, which was considered the holiest of all Rokugani sites before that city fell. Upon arriving at the Ten Thousand Temples, new monks must forsake any other order to which they belonged and pledge themselves anew to the Order of Ten Thousand Temples. They may not travel to any other temple and the Brotherhood's leadership takes care to maintain a strict balance between sects for those asked to serve here, to avoid showing favoritism for any particular part of the Brotherhood.

They perform their duties with grace and humility, advising mortal enemies to seek common ground and providing a voice for the peasantry amid the machinations of the Court. They watch very closely for signs of manipulation from one faction or another. Though the Temple is open to the public, visitors must be escorted across the grounds by a monk at all times. The masters will not suffer the Temple to be used as a hideout in which factions may scheme against each other in secret, though they always offer their services as mediators for above-the-board discussions.

Seppun Guardsmen keep watch around the outside of the Temple, though they are forbidden from entering the grounds themselves. No one may bring weapons inside the Temple — even yojimbo must divest of their steel before setting foot inside. A number of the monks of the Temple are highly trained sohei, and they act as the sole protectors of everyone within. Violence is unheard of in the sacred grounds of course. The political fallout of such an insult could destroy the Clan that instigated it, and the Imperial Families regard the Temple as the Emperor's personal protectorate.

The city's other temples all belong to specific individual Orders, most of whom were in place long before Toshi Ranbo became a capital. A few are closed to the public, their members engaged solely in personal introspection. The remainder serve the rank-and-file of the Imperial City, allowing the peasantry to seek counsel and providing advice on the ways of Shinsei to those who do not belong to the Emperor's inner circle. The Brotherhood has deliberately taken steps to lessen internal squabbles between different temples, though some still inevitably occurs. One

of the reasons the Ten Thousand Temples was built was to avoid showing favoritism to one order or another while still providing an “official” representation of the Brotherhood here in the most important city in Rokugan. This does not sit especially well with the Four Temples — once the heart of Rokugani faith in Otosan Uchi and now rebuilt with a temple in Toshi Ranbo. Their complaints, however, further justify the Brotherhood’s decision to focus on this new Temple as their “capital,” allowing it to represent all sides of the monastic community instead of just one.

The Temple of Osano-Wo

The Order of Thunder traces its roots back to this imposing structure, one of the oldest and most revered temples in Rokugan. It bears the name of the Crab Clan’s favorite son — Hida Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder — and the sohei monks who train there revere his dedication to mental and physical perfection.

The temple lies upon the Plain of Thunder, a bleak and imposing stretch of territory wracked by constant storms. It is built entirely out of limestone rocks from the nearby plain, and though its edifice is remarkably well-crafted, it often resembles a patch of granite swept bare by the elements more than any man-made structure. Lightning rods constructed by the Kaiu Family dot its ramshackle rooftop, and bolts from the omnipresent storm clouds are routinely drawn to the jutting metal artifice. At the front of the temple stands a large maze built out of limestone — considered impenetrable to any save the monks who live here.

Despite its fearsome appearance, reaching the temple is surprisingly easy. The monks of the Order of Thunder are among the most worldly of all the Shinsei Brotherhood, and they relish regular news from the rest of Rokugan. It wouldn’t do to make the messengers’ task more arduous. The road leading to it is wide and well-maintained, and while the main gate is blocked by the infamous maze, the side gates can be accessed by visitors with little difficulty. Sohei monks from the temple can often be seen practicing on the nearby plains, wielding a variety of weapons or performing martial arts moves of breathtaking skill. They always return to the Temple through the maze however, for it is an honor that only they have earned.

Upon arrival at the Temple, a new monk is required to find a piece of limestone from the nearby plain and carry it back. The limestone is used to maintain the walls and line the nearby road — a symbolic link of the monks to

the nearby land. The larger the stone, the more respect he receives. Once he has completed the task, the sohei masters assign him an apprentice’s name, which he must keep throughout his training.

An intense and brutal series of tests follows, designed to cleanse the apprentice of every impurity and render his mind and body fit. Trainees must often sleep outside in the elements, embracing the fury of Osano-Wo at all hours of the day. They learn to meditate on the roof of the Temple as lightning bolts strike home at the rods just a few feet away. The martial training has reduced veteran Crab samurai to quivering wrecks and even the most skilled monk possesses permanent scars from his or her training period. They sport those marks with pride, and will often draw attention to them over the more formal scars they earn as they progress through the Temple’s regimen.

Training usually lasts for ten years, though a few monks have accomplished it in briefer amounts of time. Martial techniques often stress the axe— favored by the patron Fortune — but the list of weapons studied and perfected within the Temple is almost beyond counting. So too do unarmed techniques play a huge role in a Thunder monk’s training, for no weapon is more potent than the hand which wields it.

When the masters believe an apprentice is ready, they present to him a final test. He must depart the temple through the great maze while being subjected to attack from both the monks of the Order and more esoteric dangers, such as geysers and burning coals that lie strewn along his path. At the end of the maze sits a brazier of burning coals, which the monk must lift and carry to the gates. The act sears the sign of Osano-Wo into his flesh, marking him forever as a monk of the Order. His name is removed yet again and another is bestowed upon him — the one he will carry for the remainder of his life. The monks then wrap his face and body in the folds of cloth for which the Order has become famous. Few monks of the Order ever remove them save in the privacy of their own quarters.

The monks of the Temple remain vigorously engaged in Rokugani society. Though they do not involve themselves in Clan politics and acknowledge the Emperor’s authority in only the most basic terms, they are devoted to the protection of the innocent through the use of righteous force. Their members travel to other monasteries throughout Rokugan, protecting other Shinsei monks so that they may pursue Enlightenment in peace. They wander the land in

search of injustice, protecting peasant and Daimyo alike from the dangers of the world. Some of them remain in the Temple of Osano-Wo all their lives, perfecting martial techniques and developing new weapons and strategies to aid the righteous in their struggles.

Other monks often take exception to their undue worldliness, and chide them for their interest in culture, politics and worldly events. But the Order of Thunder sees itself as a wall between the remainder of Shinsei's Brotherhood and the material world. Without them, no other monk could find the wisdom of Heaven. Small wonder that the Crab look upon them with such favor, and that more Crab samurai come to their Temple than from all other Clans combined.

The Shrine of the Seven Thunders

The Order of the Seven Thunders is something of a paradox. They believe in engagement with the Empire and many members walk the roads of Rokugan for all of their days. Yet the Shrine that embodies their faith is closed to outsiders, and the monks within never venture forth from their halls. They are at once welcoming and forbidding, open to all and available to none. Their teachers claim that they embody the duality of human existence through such a philosophy: their members step forth from a Shrine of untouched purity to bring the wisdom of Shinsei to the world.

The Order of the Seven Thunders adheres strictly to the teachings of Shinsei, allowing neither consideration of the Fortunes nor worship of the ancestors to cloud their devotion to the Tao. They further maintain that the Seven Thunders were Shinsei's greatest gift to Rokugan — a manifestation of his wisdom distilled into seven human forms. The fact that the original Seven Thunders were so flawed as men and women — abounding with sin and in some cases actively Tainted — is proof to them that even humanity's imperfection can serve as the vessels of perfect wisdom.

The Shrine itself stands as the pinnacle of their faith, built from plain wood and stone shaped into a vision of natural beauty. It stands at the spot where the original Seven Thunders gathered before heading into the Shadowlands to defeat Fu Leng. Its confines are unadorned, and the main courtyard is very plain, despite the fact that the surrounding countryside is lush and beautiful. The Temple holds nothing more than cells for sleeping, a central kitchen, a central gathering place around the Shrine,

and a number of meditation chambers. The monks believe that anything more than that would constitute extravagance. The Shrine itself contains artifacts of the Thunders' lives, as well as a few precious trinkets that Shosuro brought back with her when she returned from the Shadowlands. Similarly, the monks pay homage to the second Seven Thunders with artifacts and relics from their lives as well.

Beyond that, the monks devote themselves to solitary meditation on Shinsei's wisdom. They carry no texts save the Tao within their walls, and their debates consist solely of philosophical treatises concerning its wisdom. At the heart of their queries is the paradox the Thunders represent — perfection embodied in imperfect forms. If the Thunders could resonate with Shinsei's teachings so harmoniously, then so too can any man, and the monks spend each day in deep contemplation of how their lives may reflect those of the Thunders.

It is a difficult path, made all the harder by the Order's relentless focus on the Tao. Many monks find they are unable to continue it for longer than a few years at a time. When the need comes, they depart — wandering the paths of Rokugan in search of Enlightenment. Some spend the rest of their days away from the Shrine, seeking that which only they can define. Others return, refreshed and renewed, to continue their difficult journey within the Shrine's walls. They must never speak of the things they have found to the other monks, and whatever insight they have gained must be focused solely through the text of the Tao.

Pilgrims regularly gather at the gates of the Shrine to pay honor to the Thunders with gifts and prayers. A number of smaller shrines can be found along the road leading up to it, most filled with offerings to one Thunder or another. An impromptu tent city can be found outside, full of peddlers selling goods to the pilgrims as well as tents for the faithful themselves.

The size of this ramshackle community waxes and wanes according to the season. In the winter, it is often abandoned, while spring and summer holy days see more people here than any of the towns in the surrounding provinces. The Shrine itself is closed to all visitors, however, and none of the monks inside ever responds to entreaties. It is said that the Emperor himself was once turned away, and that Kiho magics placed upon the gates prevent them from being opened by anyone save members of the Brotherhood.

The monks, of course, will neither confirm nor deny such rumors. Those who travel the lands of Rokugan are often very open and talkative, but they never speak about the Shrine or their experiences within its walls. "It must remain pure," is their answer to every entreaty, "lest we forget what purity can be."

New Kiho

The following Kiho are practiced by some of the monks in the temples described in this book. They are gathered here for your convenience.

Kitsu's Leap (Air Kiho)

TYPE: Mystical

MASTERY: 4

The monks at the Temple of Listening Ghosts pay homage to the lost race of kitsu. On occasion, the kitsu have been known to grant them a portion of their power, lending the monks the strength, sight and reflexes of their long-gone physical forms. You gain a number of Free Raises equal to your Fire Ring or Water Ring (your choice) to any Athletics Skill Roll involving jumping or leaping. It is said that only monks sporting the mystical scars delivered by the kitsu may use this Kiho, though enforcement of that rule is up to the GM.

Serenity of the Stars

ELEMENT: Void

TYPE: Internal

MASTERY: 3

The monks of the Heaven's Wisdom temple spend their evenings studying the skies in an effort to ascertain the path of the future. Their constant vigilance has given them uncanny understanding into the nature of eternity... and a means to emulate it when they wish. By spending a Void point, you may enter a state that is extremely close to death — your vital functions slow, your body temperature drops, and you take on every sign of one who is dead. You remain aware of your immediate surroundings while in this state (including the presence of others up to 10 feet away) and you do not decompose. Neither can you be harmed by any physical blows, though Kiho and shugenja

spells will affect you as normal. The state lasts for twenty-four hours; at the end of that time, you regain any lost Void points which you may have spent. You can choose to come out of the state whenever you wish. However, if you do so before the allotted twenty-four hours is up, you do not regain any of your lost Void points.

Shinsei's True Path

ELEMENT: Earth

TYPE: Mystical

MASTERY: 4

The Temple of the Roaming Herd utilizes this Kiho in their endless wanderings across the Unicorn plains. It allows them to sense the grand movements of all living things, and to direct their journey in a way that matches the harmonies of that great rhythm. By spending a Void point, you may determine your exact location within the Emerald Empire, including distance to the nearest settlements, weather patterns in your vicinity, and the presence of any group of twenty or more sentient creatures within 50 miles. Your bare feet must be touching the ground when you activate this Kiho.

The Thunder Speaks

ELEMENT: Air

TYPE: Mystical

MASTERY: 5

This seemingly paradoxical Kiho was developed in the Temple of Osano-Wo as an extension of mystic chanting techniques. Some monks believe that the wisdom of Shinsei may be contained in a simple utterance, and that to chant those syllables properly is to attain Enlightenment. The Order of Osano-Wo uses it to utter a single note from the depths of the abdomen so loud and powerful that it stuns all those who hear it. When you activate this Kiho, all persons and creatures within 20' x your Earth Ring must make a Contested Air Roll against you. All who fail are stunned and may take *no actions during their next turn*.

MASTERS OF MAGIC

RELIGION AND THE
GREAT CLANS

This appendix covers the other six Great Clans and their relationship to religion. Each section includes a brief discussion of religious traditions, festivals, and holy days, as well as some specific Brotherhood of Shinsei monasteries within their territory.

The Crab Clan

The Crab's view of Shinsei is filtered through their all-encompassing duties of protecting Rokugan against the Shadowlands. To that end, they view its truths primarily by what strengths it can provide them and how it allows them to better understand their foes. Crab understanding of religious teachings is based in the interaction between their Clan founder Hida and Shinsei himself in the days following the great contest to see who would become the first Emperor of Rokugan. Hida had been the first of the eight children of Sun and Moon to fall in the contest — despite his mighty strength, which no other being could match. Shinsei taught him how to draw wisdom from defeat, to observe his own shortcomings, and to acknowledge their reality instead of burying them beneath his pride. By knowing oneself, one can understand one's weaknesses and thus work to counter or correct them. The Crab have taken this to heart ever since.

Today, the Clan views Shinsei's teachings as a crucible in which they can perfect their body and mind. They em-

brace a rigorous and unflinching regimen of self examination: studying their actions, weighing the causes, and learning about those parts of themselves that others can exploit or undermine. With that knowledge comes the ability to either address their personal flaws or to recognize when someone else is attempting to exploit them. Physical fitness forms the backbone of their regimen, but so too does an understanding of the soul. The Crab are infamous for being rude, uncouth, and temperamental. While they don't worry about that reputation in and of itself, they do care about whether it presents some kind of weakness for foes to exploit. The teachings of Shinsei, they believe, can help them shore up that weakness by understanding how and why they behave as they do.

Knowing oneself, however, is far easier than attempting to know one's enemy. The creatures of the Shadowlands represent a perversion of the natural order. They twist and corrupt the harmony of the Five Rings, befouling everything they touch. And yet, if the teachings of Shinsei are to be believed, they too serve a purpose in the universe. What could it be? And how does that purpose affect the Crab's sacred mission to keep all of Rokugan safe from them? Those questions have bedeviled Crab religious scholars for thousands of years. Opinions remain deeply divided and arguments periodically rage throughout monasteries and Kuni Family gatherings alike.

The predominant belief is that the Shadowlands exists as a test to challenge the strength of the Crab (and by extension, all of humanity). It serves to remind them of the consequences of failure and to admonish them to perfect

their minds and bodies. "A life unchallenged is a life un-lived," the monks in the Crab lands are fond of saying, and what greater challenge exists than that lying beyond the Carpenter Wall? Not only does it serve as a crucible to test your own capabilities, but it allows you to alleviate the suffering of the creatures beyond the Wall. By destroying them, you send them back to the forge of creation, hopefully to be reborn as something less corrupt. The Crab's eternal war against the Shadowlands is thus not only just and necessary, but in strict keeping with the Tao of Shinsei.

There is an alternate opinion, however, mostly held by the darkest of the Kuni Witch Hunters. They believe that the Shadowlands is not a test but a riddle — an mystery housing one of the fundamental secrets of the universe. If they were to unravel that mystery, they could not only cleanse the Shadowlands of its Taint but

bring about a new age of paradise on Earth. Suffering and pain would be a thing of the past; war and violence would fade into memory. They study the Shadowlands in hopes of understanding this mystery — and in the process, they risk falling victim to the very corruption they believe they can cleanse.

Regardless of which side of the debate they take, Crab religious scholars agree that the more they know about the Shadowlands, the better. Just as Shinsei teaches the value of knowing oneself, so too is knowing one's enemy a vital step on the path to wisdom (and, more practically, a way to avoid being noisily devoured by some Thing That Should Not Be). Kuni shugenja probe those mysteries both out of necessity and out of the philosophical belief that it will help



them better understand the Shadowlands' place in the cosmic order. If they ever learn that — and more importantly, how to correct the perceived imbalance that the Shadowlands represents — then the Crab's millennia-long task may someday come to an end.

Painted Faces

Members of the Kuni Family often paint their faces with bizarre and frightening make-up, taking on the aspect of a demonic mask. Their reasons for doing so are complicated and not fully understood even by other Crab. Some believe that it is intended to frighten and baffle onlookers. Others maintain that it represents their affinity for the creatures of the Shadowlands — a way of drawing close to them so that they may better understand their nature. The truth contains elements of both, but is really something entirely different.

Their painted faces do indeed represent masks that are supposed to hide their true nature. But in their minds, this is not a method of deception, but rather of protection. The Kuni place their very souls in peril by studying the Shadowlands. To prevent this, they must keep their inner selves strong and pure while also acknowledging the dangers with which they flirt. The make-up is a symbolic shield intended to trap and contain the dark forces of the Shadowlands while leaving their souls untouched. Accordingly, they use elaborate ceremonies in applying and removing it. A Kuni shugenja first receives his make-up from his master, who paints it on him in secret as a part of his gempukku ceremony. Every shugenja's pattern is unique: no two are exactly alike. A chamber in Shiro Kuni contains paintings of every pattern that every Kuni shugenja has ever worn. From that moment forth, the shugenja must always apply his face paint alone, after making proper entreaties to the Fortunes for protection.

When removing it, he must use a purified cloth and sacred water. The cloth must then be dried over a fire using specific herbs and burned, removing the Taint which it has accumulated while he has worn it. The process is largely symbolic. While some Kuni claim to wear make-up sprinkled with jade powder, there is little practical evidence to suggest that the painted faces have any actual protective value. But as a representation of what the Kuni Family must grapple with in the course of their duties, and as a way of acknowledging the dangers that they face, it is without price. The Kuni take the application of their masks as a sacred duty and it remains one of the Family's most deeply held traditions.

Festivals and Holidays

The Crab lands have few reasons to celebrate, and few resources that can be spared from the overwhelming responsibilities of maintaining the Carpenter Wall. Holidays tend to be simple affairs, marked by the occasional parade and offerings to the Fortunes, but nowhere near as elaborate or ebullient as those farther north. The Crab celebrate the New Year, the Emperor's birthday, and large festivals like the Chrysanthemum Festival in mid summer. Otherwise, their holidays are limited to solemn observances to the fallen. The annual Day of Remembrance pays tribute to all those who gave their lives to keep Rokugan secure, held on the anniversary of the Battle of the Cresting Wave and the death of Kuni Osaku.

Crab Temples: Temple of Soothing Jade

This temple stands on the outskirts of the Kuni Wastes, not far from the Kaiu Wall. Its walls are of imposing stone and its doors are sealed with bands of enchanted jade, but they were not built to keep anything out. The Temple of Soothing Jade acts as an asylum for those driven mad by the Shadowlands Taint.

Extended periods of time in the Shadowlands can have a devastating effect on even the strongest minds. Samurai may becoming unhinged and not show signs of it for years, and you may escape Fu Leng's corruption in the short term only to find yourself years later cracking to the very foundations under the horror of what you have seen. Bushi who begin to show signs of the Taint are enlisted in The Damned and are allowed to seek an honorable death before the madness can overtake them. Once they succumb to the Taint, however, the Crab can do little except put them out of their misery before they can harm anyone else. Some, however (especially Witch Hunters who have served the Kuni long and well enough to merit special consideration), are taken to places like the Temple of Soothing Jade.

Here, the monks work to tend the spiritual injuries of those who have sacrificed their sanity in the battle against Fu Leng. They restrain the violent, counsel the lucid, and tend to the needs of those left mute and catatonic. The men sent here are all beyond help, but they can be calmed in some circumstances, and allowed to find what peace they can without harming anyone else. Monks from the temple must often argue strenuously with the Crab Clan to be allowed to take in such patients. To the Crab,

the crazed warriors are actively dangerous, and if left alive they constitute a threat to those who are still sane. The monks' adherence to compassion and mercy argues otherwise, however, and though many Crab samurai scoff at the "weak" Brotherhood monks "protecting" those so touched, they allow their fallen brethren to be taken in.

The lower floors of the temple consist of the monks' quarters. They are simple affairs as one would expect from a Brotherhood monastery, although there is a preponderance of jade fittings in the halls and doorways. The central courtyard features a large koi pond — which is difficult to maintain in these arid conditions, but the monks find it has a calming effect on many of their charges. An apothecary contains a number of salves and potions.

The upper stories contain cells for the temple's madmen, constructed of stone and set with barred doors and windows. Unlike Rokugani prisons, the monks believe in providing as much comfort as they can to their patients, while still keeping the most dangerous inmates secure. Though barred, the windows are large and open to the air, allowing sunlight to stream in and inmates to have a view of the surroundings. Some need to be restrained lest they harm themselves, but calmer inmates are permitted a modicum of comforts such as a brazier for incense and perhaps a picture or two. Some of the cells are ringed with jade, which can be beneficial to the right inmate (though it causes others to shriek in unbearable agony). Those with a history of peaceful behavior can even leave their cells and walk the grounds for a few hours each day, always under the careful eye of a Brotherhood monk.

Unsurprisingly, the Kuni take an interest in the temple, and their researchers often ask to speak with the inmates. Though the monks are somewhat wary of the Kuni (who can be as unnerving in their own way as any madman), they do not often refuse. The Kuni claim they have gained valuable insight into the Shadowlands Taint through their talks, while many of the inmates whom they interview are left calmer and less agitated by the exchange. Because of that, the Brotherhood is inclined to allow the Kuni to continue visiting the Temple, despite the fact that the shugenjas' interest in it has never appeared entirely wholesome.

Escape from the temple is nearly impossible. Absolute security was one of the conditions the Crab had for turning their Tainted samurai over to the Brotherhood, and the monks work to fulfill it as diligently as they care for the inmates' health. The cells themselves are nearly impenetrable, with windows and doors designed by Kaiu

engineers to remain firmly in place. The inmates' cells are all located several stories above ground, and the walls of the temple are smooth and sheer, so that those who get out via the windows can go nowhere except straight down onto the cold, hard stone of the courtyard. Escape through the doors means passing through several stories worth of alert sohei monks: stairways in the Temple are arranged such that one must traverse an entire building story in order to reach the next one. A legion of the Crab Reserve Army is stationed less than two miles away, and they maintain a state of constant readiness to respond to trouble at the Temple of Soothing Jade.

Despite its imposing nature, the monks of the temple consider their mission a very positive one. The sacrifices their charges have made on behalf of Clan and Empire are immeasurable — they have lost their very sense of self to the horrors beyond the Kaiu Wall. The least the monks can do is ensure that the remainder of their time on earth is quiet and unmolested, hopefully preparing their souls for something better in their next life.

The Crane Clan

The Crane are the masters of aesthetics, and their principles of beauty and harmony are reflected by the monks in their lands. To embrace the way of Shinsei is to see the beauty in all things and to revel in the grand connections that bind the universe together. The monks of the Crane lands teach that all efforts hold value, that all work is art, and that all forms of craftsmanship should express the joys of Heaven.

Clan leaders believe that this philosophy reaches its peak in the stunning works of the Kakita artisans — painting, poetry, origami, and storytelling — and in the graceful displays of etiquette practiced by their diplomats. But it can also be found in the farmer's plow, in the blacksmith's anvil, in the wooden bowl made for consuming rice. A peasant's hut that can withstand a typhoon while those around it are reduced to matchsticks is as lovely in its own way as the most revered Kakita sumi-e painting. Even broken or discarded objects can contain this beauty, for they are but steps on a road leading to greater things. The craftsman who discards an inferior piece of work is

moving towards a more profound expression of his talents — a place he could not have reached had this “failure” not helped reveal the way.

But beauty in and of itself means nothing unless it provides insight into the nature of the world. To that end, it must flow organically into its surroundings, both physical and spiritual. An onlooker must see its connection to the hand that created it, to the inspiration that conceived of it, to the purpose that it serves, to the natural elements of which it is composed, and to the ways in which all of them are combined into its shape and form. Every object in the universe contains this sacred link; the path to truth lies in understanding the grand design to which it leads.

Accordingly, monks in the Crane lands stress the importance of the natural world — the trees, the ocean, the rocks, and the myriad beasts that unknowingly embody the balance of nature. They believe that no human hand can create a leaf so exquisitely as the tree does without effort, and no skilled craftsman can embody the perfect joy of a newborn child. The natural world serves as both an inspiration and a source of humility. Just as mortals strive to recreate the inherent aesthetic qualities of nature through their own vision, so too should they realize the sheer hopelessness of their task. They can strive — and indeed should strive — to express their gifts to the best of their ability, but so too should they know that they will never reach true perfection. Thus does the cosmos keep men humble, even as it inspires them to move ever forward.

The concept of “no thought” plays an important role in this understanding. Knowledge can be a burden when it clutters the mind, and the more one learns about a given skill or craft, the more one realizes how little one truly knows. The solution is to free oneself from that apparatus: to simply *do* rather than *try*. Just as the tree grows its leaves without effort and the stream flows endlessly to wherever its destination lies, so too must the artisan’s craft spring freely from his soul. He must move without consideration, never pausing to ponder the method or technique. He must do this whether he is a peasant planting rice in the fields or a Daimyo negotiating a new treaty with the Lion Clan. The mind must be emptied, and actions should express pure unfiltered self.

To do so is to achieve one’s purpose in life, and the Crane have taken such teachings to heart. The great artists of the Clan go about their work in the belief that — when they are at peace with the universe — then a great masterpiece

will flow from their fingertips without conscious thought at all. On the other end of the spectrum, Kakita duelists can employ it to strike as their style requires, as quickly as lightning and as smoothly as the flow of water.

Along with the concept of no thought, monks in the Crane lands stress the impermanence of the universe. All things ebb and flow with time, and the perfection one seeks to attain is a temporary condition at best. Even the most beautiful painting will eventually fade and the fields one plows today may become a desert or a mountain range tomorrow. The concept serves not only to teach the Crane humility, but to admonish them to seize and appreciate opportunities when they arise, for they may never appear again. Crane samurai embrace the notion by contemplating the inevitability of their own deaths, while Crane artisans emphasize it by stressing fragility and delicacy in their works.

Indeed, some Crane artists use this philosophy as the sole purpose of their work. The most obvious expression of it is the design and care of rock gardens, but they also build beautiful sculptures out of temporary materials such as ice, driftwood, or wet sand. Such creations are then placed amid scenes of natural serenity, where the elements will undo their work after only a few hours. Though many express bafflement at their technique, some of the Kakita Family’s best artists will journey hundreds of miles to watch them work and Brotherhood monks in Crane lands will occasionally emulate them as well.

Festivals and Holidays

Crane religious festivals always incorporate natural surroundings into their celebrations. The centerpiece is invariably some local natural landmark — often the site of the Brotherhood shrine — while parades will follow a local river or stream as often as they will the road. They are invariably joyful affairs, intended primarily to acknowledge the beauty of being alive and the wonders the universe can bring. The Crane nobility couch their religious ceremonies in extremely elaborate rituals, dedicated to the finery of Rokugani culture. But even then, the motifs reflect those of the natural world, with images of trees, gardens, and ocean scenes often present.

Festivals are also an opportunity to display one’s skills and craftsmanship. Every artisan in every village will have a stall showing his wares during a festival. Contests and competitions are routine for every Crane celebration, with any sort of material object potentially subject

to appraisal, ranging from priceless works of art to simple farmer's tools. Iaijutsu duelists often travel the land on holy days, seeking to demonstrate their abilities in formal exhibitions staged with the bokken instead of the katana, while monks relate tales and stories designed to convey moral lessons. Even solemn holidays have an air of the festive to them, and celebratory meals are part and parcel for Crane holy days. In addition to religious festivals celebrated throughout Rokugan, the Crane acknowledge the changing to the seasons, the date of Daidoji Hakayu's return from the Shadowlands, and astronomical phenomena such as comets and the rise and set of constellations.

Crane Temples: Heaven's Wisdom Temple

Few outside of the Brotherhood think much of the Heaven's Wisdom temple. It is located in the midst of an elevated plain in Asahina lands. The stargazing conditions are said to be ideal here, unmatched anywhere in Rokugan save in certain portions of the Phoenix lands. The nighttime sky resembles an inky pool, with the serene grasslands below matching its quiet, perfect stillness. The area's beauty is breathtaking, like most Crane lands, and the elegant simplicity of the temple is enhanced by stunning artworks that were mostly fashioned by the resident monks.

Heaven's Wisdom Temple has dedicated itself solely to the study of astrology: gazing upon the stars in an effort to understand the will of Heaven. The plain is only rarely troubled by rainfall and the monks of the Temple will often spend entire evenings sitting outside and contemplating the stars. It is said that on certain nights, land and sky seem to blend into one, and those who meditate upon the plain on those nights will learn the secrets of Heaven. Some monks claim to have suddenly found Enlightenment during such times, only to feel it fade again as the stars give way to the first light of morning.

More than just a secluded haven of contemplation, the Heaven's Wisdom Temple is a bastion of astrological knowledge. The monks within have studied the skies for centuries, and the Temple's library contains observations of the movements of objects in the sky on every night for the past six centuries. The mundane facts of the movements of the stars are recorded in uncanny detail, and alongside them predictions that are sometimes made based on those facts. While the signs the monks read are often vague, they claim that they have pointed the way

to a number of major events in Rokugan's history. Other Brotherhood monks travel from the ends of the Empire to consult with the Temple on the meaning of this sign or that omen. The masters keep their share of secrets, but they have proven far more willing to share insight with outsiders than, say, the Isawa scholars of the Phoenix Clan, making them an invaluable hub in the Brotherhood's repository of knowledge.

Crane Temples: Temple of the Winding Stream

The Winding Stream is not a large temple, nor is it particularly old. Indeed, it is one of the most recently founded temples in all of Rokugan. It holds a small contingent of about a dozen monks, all dedicated to the Crane-based martial art mizu-do. The temple itself stands in the midst of a small lake in the Kakita lands, accessible only by boat (or by getting very wet). The temple's small dock serves as a greeting place for students and visitors, as well as a spot on which to train. The monks there live solely on rice from nearby villages and fish caught in the lake. The temple interior is beautiful but simple, its brown-green wood matching the tea-like color of the surrounding waters. The snow-capped mountains of the Spine of the World can be seen in the distance, with lush woods surrounding the lake on all sides. The only approach follows the stream that feeds the lake and gives the shrine its name.

The Winding Stream was founded some ten years ago by a retired actress, Kakita Shinko, who mastered the art of mizu-do as part of an incomparable stage career. But as she grew older and the accolades fell into the past, she felt a sense of hollowness at all of her accomplishments. She turned to the Brotherhood, seeking inner peace, and found it with the passive techniques of her defensive martial art. She originally had thought of the technique as a prop, like a mask or costume, but as she contemplated it, she saw it open up a path to Enlightenment.

The Kakita Family consider mizu-do part of their birthright, and officially, they refuse to teach it to any but their most skilled artisans. Shinko broke with her Family when she joined the Brotherhood, claiming that its wisdom should be available to all. The Kakita were outraged, but the Crane Champion ruled that they could not act against a member of the Brotherhood without bringing great dishonor upon the Clan. Shinko was allowed to teach her technique to any whom she wished.

The shrine hasn't gathered many disciples, but those who do are extremely dedicated. Most are former Kakita performers seeking ways to hone their sensibilities as artists, but a few once hailed from other Clans and had been rebuked in their efforts to learn the martial art. Shinko teaches a very pure form, devoid of more recent efforts to add offensive capabilities to the technique. Her teachings also blend acting concepts extrapolated into a wider context, and she admonishes her students to look past the façade of the world to find the truth that lies beyond. None who have studied under her have yet to leave the monastery, though they are free to do so at any time. Some whisper that the Kakita Family has made deliberate efforts to keep every monk cloistered away, lest the secrets of mizu-do escape their lands, but in truth the tranquility of the landscape holds Shinko's disciples far better than any threat.

The Lion Clan

The Lion value honor and their approach to Shinsei's teachings reflects what they hold dear. They use study of the Tao to temper their warlike nature, lest it lead them unintentionally down a shameful path, but they are not given to introspection, and the contemplative life of a monk has proven difficult for more than a few of their former samurai. To that end, many monks from the Lion Clan seek Enlightenment through movement and effort rather than quiet serenity. Daily exercise becomes a constant part of their regimen, pushing themselves beyond the limits of what even they thought possible. Monks who originally came from other Clans sometimes believe that such students have learned nothing, and that they remain Lion to their core under their Brotherhood robes.

The truth is somewhat more complex. Lion samurai are used to leading by example, and they often gauge their actions by the impact it will have on those around them. That need to impress others — a prerequisite of leadership in war — falls by the wayside when they don the robes of the Brotherhood. No one else in the temples notices how far you ran that day, or cares about the time you once defeated an entire Scorpion company with only two other bushi and a pair of chopsticks. There is only you and the heavens — alone for the remainder of your days.

Most Lion monks spend their apprenticeship grappling with that truth and slowly turning their sense of self inward rather than outward. They seek to know themselves for the first time in their lives — no longer out of duty to Clan and Emperor, but in an effort to understand their own souls. Their intensive exercise and unflinching devotion to martial arts serves as a crucible in which their own weaknesses are revealed to them. Through that regimen, they can look at themselves as they truly are, rather than what their Clan or their Emperor needed them to be.

The revelations can be harsh sometimes, revealing shortcomings that the former samurai had buried for decades. They may be reminded of fear they once felt, or of passions they sacrificed for the sake of duty. They may look back upon their lives and see the opportunities they missed, the joys they did not share, the secret doubts and pains that they could never reveal even to themselves. But while monks from other Clans might be driven mad by such an understanding, the Lion find that they can embrace it. No hearts hold more courage than the heart of a Lion, and none can gaze into the abyss of the soul so unwaveringly. As they work their way through the painful process of shedding their former life, many former Lion find that they emerge stronger as a result.

Ex-Lion monks tend to fall into one of two categories, both rather extreme. The first group remains in strict solitude, seeking out isolated monasteries or remaining behind cloistered walls for the entirety of their days. When they were samurai, they devoted their every breath to Rokugan, and now that they have retired, they owe the Empire nothing more. Such monks sometimes serve as sensei to younger monks, but most of them keep their own counsel, interacting with only a few other monks, if at all.

The second group takes the exact opposite approach. They adopt the life of a wandering sohei, and use their martial prowess to defend the weak and innocent. Their sense of honor has been strengthened by a lifetime of service, and it is now tempered by the humility of their station. They can act without considering their responsibilities to a larger political entity; they need only obey their own conscience and the wisdom of Shinsei. Naturally, they tend to belong to the Order of Osano-Wo and similarly active branches of the Brotherhood.

Both groups maintain a stoic façade against the outside world. Many take vows of silence and few respond to questions or comments with anything more than a few words. They are not given to lengthy moralizing or long

tales. They prefer to demonstrate any wisdom they have to impart through their actions, or to use nearby symbols such as rocks and trees rather than elaborate lectures. Few of them are scribes and they rarely spend much time in the Brotherhood's libraries. Even former members of the Ikoma Family eschew the texts and histories they once pored over so lovingly.

The Clan as a whole treats Brotherhood monks within their territory with a strange mixture of bafflement and respect. The Lion dislike the cryptic riddles and simple lessons in which Shinsei delighted. They have no patience for the Brotherhood's contemplative ways and unwillingness to act in the face of threats. And yet the Brotherhood's martial skills impress them as do few other things in the Empire. Some Lion samurai view the monks as cowards, even those who hail from their own Clan. They change their tune when they see one disable a heavily armed bushi with what seems like a few simple movements, or sit for hours in a raging storm without moving. For the most part, they simply leave the monks be, paying lip service to their devotion, but otherwise reminding them to stay out of Clan business.

Festivals and Holidays

Lion festivals are filled with military dignity and ceremonies designed to honor their ancestors, especially those who fell in battle. They aren't entirely joyless affairs, but they are still serious, intended to acknowledge the Clan's achievements and remember its obligations. Gempukku ceremonies are often held on the anniversaries of major battles and an Ikoma Family member is always on hand to note the Lion who perished so that the Empire might live. The New Year is a time for reflection on one's duties. Every samurai in the Clan renews his vows to the Emperor on that day, and most other holidays begin with similar pledges each dawn. The Bon Festival at the end of fall is particularly solemn, with litanies of the dead recited while shrines across the Lion lands are piled high with offerings and sacrifices.

But this isn't to say that the Lion are incapable of embracing the more joyful side of holidays. The Chrysanthemum Festival and similar occasions remind them of why they fight, and of the beautiful parts of life that their sacrifices protect. Most festivals involve demonstrations of military techniques and mock duels, as well as contests among the peasantry such as foot races and weightlifting events. Singing and dancing take place as well. It is

not unknown for Lion Clan samurai to walk among the peasantry as jesters — disguised in masks and allowing those beneath them to mock them incessantly. Though none speak openly of it — and woe be to any peasant who brings it up in a Lion samurai's presence — it is thought to be a valuable lesson in humility for those who become too boastful even for the Lion.

Temples: The Temple of Listening Ghosts

Almost every member of the Kitsu Family makes a pilgrimage to the Temple of Listening Ghosts at some point in their lives. It lies less than a day from the ancestral Kitsu castle, in the mountains where the first kitsu claimed their territory. Early Rokugani did not understand that the kitsu were a sentient race, and made brutal war upon them, led by the Lion Clan founder Akodo. The humans eventually realized their mistake, but not before they had driven the noble creatures to the brink of extinction. The Kitsu Family is descended from the last five kitsu to ever live — the remainder were wiped out, destroyed by the Lion Clan's recklessness. This burden weighs heavily upon the Kitsu Family, and the Temple of Listening Ghosts was built in part to atone for the crime.

The temple stands balanced between two narrow peaks, accessible though a series of stairways from a village far below. Though the terrain is rugged, there are a number of lush valleys in the vicinity, sporting trees, rushing streams, and a few herds of wild goats. This was the territory of the kitsu once. The temple itself is decorated with numerous visages of the kitsu, facing the cardinal directions and standing watch over their lands until they return. The front of the temple is reasonably well protected, like any Lion important structure, but the rear opens up into a wide mountain meadow. This is intentional, inviting the lost kistu to enter the temple should they choose.

The monks here dedicate themselves to the memory of these long-lost creatures, praying to their spirits and gathering as much knowledge as they can about the way they lived. In their minds, they exist to serve the kitsu. Their presence is intended to provide servants in the mortal realm for the beings who no longer walk there. They never ask for anything from the spirits, and shugenja who visit are admonished never to make any requests of any spirit in the surrounding lands except in the direst emergency. "Do not take from those who have already lost so much," the monks admonish.

Three times each day, they gather in the temple's central chamber and entreat the lost spirits to return, offering favors and promises if the kitsu will only bless the land with their presence again. Occasionally, individual members will depart the temple on some inscrutable mission, designed to appease a particular kitsu spirit. It can be as simple as gathering a seed from a distant field to plant somewhere in the vicinity or as elaborate as halting a brewing skirmish between warring Clans. Whatever the purpose, they do not speak of it to outsiders, save to ask directions or to enquire cryptically after the object of their quest. Some of the objects they return with are sacrificed to the spirits of the kitsu. Others are stored in the temple vaults, awaiting some purpose known only to the spirits. A few are displayed to visitors or left out in the nearby valleys like the aforementioned seed. But their reasons for being there and purpose to the kitsu are never mentioned to anyone outside of the temple, not even to members of the Kitsu Family themselves.

Atonement is also a recurring part of the monks' regimen here. Most of the time it follows the traditions of other Brotherhood enclaves — fasting, meditating, or enduring some similar mental or physical burden. But sometimes it becomes more shocking. Kitsu Family members who join the Temple must shave their hair and burn it as a symbol of their devotion. Many sport scars that appear to have come from the great cats themselves; some came from ritualistic wounds performed by mortal tools, but a few seem more natural, placed in random areas of the body rather than on specified areas. The monks who bear them do not speak about them, but they carry themselves with a certain pride, and others in the temple give them undue deference over their fellows. Rumors are whispered among the Kitsu Family of journeys made into the spirit realms to find wandering kitsu spirits, and of conversations with them that match those of the Clan founder Akodo, who spoke at length with them once peace had been made between them and their human persecutors.

In addition, the monks of the temple are the only people in Rokugan who know the exact location of the hidden valley that served as the kitsu's earliest home. Legends say that Akodo journeyed there at the end of his life, to find only ashes and bones remaining. But he returned with the founders of the Kitsu Family — the last five kitsu, bound forever in human form. No human besides the monks of the temple have set foot in the valley since that day, and none save them know the secret paths that lead

to it. Upon taking their vow, every monk in the temple must journey to the valley and spend a day and a night communing with the spirits alone. They are not told how to reach the valley; either the kitsu will lead them there or they won't. Until they do so, the monk is not permitted to actually join the temple.

On a more mundane level, the Temple contains copious information on both the kitsu and the naga, who were instrumental in providing much of the order's current repository of knowledge. During the snake-men's time awake in the brief period surrounding the second Day of Thunder, temple monks sought them out for word of the great cat-creatures. The naga proved to be a great repository of knowledge, which the monks duly recorded. In gratitude, they also agreed to store some of the naga's precious knowledge, and even a few artifacts that the great snakes left behind. Many of their monks can speak and read the naga's language, and their library holds more knowledge about the naga than anywhere outside of the Dragon and Phoenix lands.

Its store of information about the kitsu is, of course, unparalleled. All Kitsu Family shugenja and most members of the Family who follow other professions, are admonished to journey to the Temple in order to learn about their forebears and meditate on the blood debt they still owe. Only members of the Kitsu Family are allowed to retire here as monks. Outsiders from other Clans are welcome, though protocol dictates that they first receive the permission of the Kitsu Daimyo. It is one of the Family's most sacred sites, and they do not grant access to it lightly; the entire Clan has gone to war over smaller insults.

The Scorpion Clan

To some, the idea of a Scorpion monk is a contradiction. The Brotherhood seeks harmony where the Scorpion spread only discord. The Brotherhood embraces truth while the Scorpion wallow in deception. The Brotherhood works to unburden themselves from the material world, while the Scorpion live for politics, treachery and the manipulation of their fellow man. It is true that fewer Scorpions join the ranks of Shinsei than any other Clan save the Spider. But their ethos and that of the Brotherhood are not nearly as incompatible as outsiders believe.

The Scorpion themselves understand the Tao of Shinsei quite well, though they rarely bother with its teachings in day-to-day life. But they find it useful to quote pertinent passages during their endless verbal gambits in court, or to confuse their enemies with ironic observations on its lessons. The Tao is a tool to them, like any other tool. It works quite well in helping them meet their goals, but to the minds of most of the Clan, it serves no other real purpose. They recognize certain connections to their beliefs, but feel it is unduly cluttered with shocking naïveté.

And yet, there are a surprising number of ways in which their philosophy perfectly matches the text they dismiss so readily. The Scorpion concern themselves with appearance and reality, and understand as no one else that the world that most people perceive is an illusion. Everything is transitory to a Scorpion. The reins of power change hands at a moment's notice, and new adversaries can appear where you least suspect them. Furthermore, they know how small actions can have large consequences; how the forces of the universe are bound into seemingly trivial things. Complex schemes can begin with just a few whispered words, and even a Great Clan's fortunes can rise and fall at the fluttering of a butterfly's wings.

It is not so difficult to transfer that understanding to a more spiritual context. If life is an illusion, then there must be some greater truth behind it all, and entry into the monastery provides the opportunity to truly seek it for the first time. If small actions affect larger events, then the pattern they form must serve something more than power and control.

More than a few Scorpion make that connection at some point in their lives. Some renounce their duties immediately and seek out the nearest temple to live as monks. Others continue to serve their Daimyo and the Emperor, but always carry knowledge of that insight in their hearts... waiting for the day that they can finally put their burden down. Many monks from the Scorpion Clan express relief at being able to shed the trappings of their complicated lives — to let all the plots and manipulation fall away, leaving simple, unvarnished truths in their wake. While some of Shinsei's lessons prove confounding to them, others can be grasped with remarkable ease. In the right environment, their transition from worldly plotter to enlightened Taoist can progress faster than even that of a Dragon.

Former Scorpion monks excel at the more practical ends of the Brotherhood. While only a tiny number become sohei, a huge percentage become scholars, maintaining the

scrolls and collected wisdom of their respective temple. The Scorpion's hunger for knowledge finds fertile ground amid the Brotherhood's collected texts. They spend many long hours both maintaining existing archives and adding to them through careful and painstaking record keeping. Some speak ruefully of learning secrets they spent a lifetime pursuing, only to understand now that none of them really mattered.

From time to time, the Scorpion have sent spies into the Brotherhood monasteries in an attempt to keep an eye on the monks' behavior. Such efforts have often backfired however, as the process of apprenticeship either washes out the prospective mole, or opens his eyes to deeper truths that cause him to abandon his former mission. Those who remain rarely find anything worth reporting. The Brotherhood has no interest in material power, and beyond a few martial arts techniques and the odd piece of ancient history, they will gladly share what they know with any samurai who comes knocking on their door. The few times that a Scorpion mole has actively betrayed the Brotherhood have had dire consequences for the Clan. The Emperor often demands seppuku at the perceived dishonor to the carriers of Shinsei's wisdom, and the resulting political fallout has caused far more damage than the benefits were worth. While the Scorpion still keep quiet tabs on the Order, they rarely do more than watch these days.

Holidays and Festivals

Even the Scorpion take an occasional break from the subtle business of Clan and Empire and they too do honor to the wisdom of Shinsei. Their treachery serves always to protect the Emperor and, like the Lion, they need moments every now and again to remind themselves of what their sacrifices protect. Many Scorpion holidays are deeply private occasions, when Clan members withdraw into their chambers, remove their masks, and contemplate their purpose under Heaven. They believe that such events help replenish them, to remind them of what their myriad schemes are intended to protect, and to give them strength to commit the sometimes unspeakable acts necessary to fulfill their duties.

One particular holiday unique to the Scorpion lands is known as the Day of a Thousand Silences — a peculiar means of honoring those who have died performing the Clan's secret duties. Many among them are widely perceived as traitors by the rest of Rokugan, their names unutterable save as prefaces to a curse. Other Scorpion died

committing deeds that can never be discussed — unheard and unseen, but which served in some way to make the Empire a little safer. Not even the wisest Scorpion Daimyo can name all such deeds or the valued samurai who committed them. But on the first day of the Month of the Rat, every Scorpion in Rokugan pays tribute to it. From midnight until midnight, they refuse to utter a sound — neither speaking nor shouting nor laughing nor crying. No commerce takes place in the Scorpion lands that day, and courtiers in the Empire's various halls of power conduct their business through written word alone. Their silence links them to those in their Clan who cannot speak of their deeds, while reminding outsiders that — as hated as they are — the Scorpion do their duty to the Emperor just as everyone else does.

Temple of the Midnight Cats

The Scorpion are the Clan of Secrets, with a burning urge to uncover hidden knowledge. That desire doesn't necessarily abate after they shave their heads and join a monastery. The Temple of the Midnight Cats stands at a

supposed nexus between the mortal world and the spirit realms — a place where the living can commune with the souls of their ancestors and perhaps learn what the fates have in store for them. The number of ancestor shrines in the vicinity is astonishing — both in the villages near the Temple and in the surrounding countryside. The shrines outnumber the local human population almost three to two. The monks of the temple tend to them fastidiously and the Scorpion magistrates have strict orders never to move or otherwise interfere with them. Some of the shrines stand in the midst of rice paddies, or in the main thoroughfares of village squares.

The region's other feature gives the temple its name. The area is full of cats, mostly feral strays that the same forces that necessitated the building of the shrine draw here. They eat quite well — villagers leave saucers of ox milk at the shrines as a sacrifice — and the peasants like them because they keep the local rat population under control. Most villagers allow them to wander in and out of their homes as they please, and consider it a sign of good luck when one passes through their door. The temple, too,



has opened its gateway to the felines, and the arrival of a black cat at the temple steps is considered an auspicious omen.

The monks here concern themselves with knowledge of the afterlife, and how those who have passed to the Realm of Ancestors can still make their will known in the mortal realm. Ancestor worship is not formally a part of the Tao of Shinsei. It hails from an older tradition that, like Fortune worship, remains compatible with Shinsei's teachings despite not officially belonging to them. The monks of the temple work to reconcile the two beliefs, citing instances in the Tao where Shinsei spoke of the ancestors and seeking ways to incorporate ancestor worship into Brotherhood beliefs. The inevitability of death is a key part of the Tao, which the monks use as the basis for their studies. Do the dead wish to return to the land of the living — reincarnated in new forms that erase their former existence? Or do they remain in the spirit realms as a means of clinging to who they were, aiding and guiding their descendants in order to hold on to their identities? The monks believe that such questions can lead them to still deeper truths, and that communing with the spirits of the dead will bring them the wisdom that more mundane spiritual pursuits lack.

They have amassed a huge number of scrolls recounting incidents of the dead speaking to the living. Their library is filled with such stories, from the fanciful to fastidiously accurate. Some entail prophecies or warnings delivered from beyond the grave. Others record instances of good fortune attributed to an ancestor. The temple's monks periodically walk the lands of Rokugan in search of such tales, paying particular attention to those that took place near sacred shrines or similar locales. If possible, they ask those who participated in such incident to return to the temple with them, and speak at length to the monks there.

Even more precious are those incidents when the monks themselves have witnessed the dead manifest, and have the opportunity to interact with a spirit. Meditations in the temple are designed to heighten the monks' awareness of the spirit realm and allow them to communicate with those who dwell there. Many Rokugani travel to the temple hoping to speak with departed relatives, or to gain advice on how best to curry the favor of their ancestors. Incidents in which the ancestor has obliged — either to a relative or a monk — are infrequent, but take place far more often than they might in other parts of the Empire. The scrolls recounting such incidents are among the

most precious in the temple's library, guarded fiercely by the monks and off-limits to all save the most auspicious guests.

What the monks do with such accumulated knowledge is something of a mystery. Certainly, they demonstrate a profound understanding of the spirit realms and can speak at length about Shinsei's beliefs on the lands of the dead. But though they belong to the Brotherhood, they still dwell in the Scorpion lands, and rumors abound that the Clan uses the Temple's knowledge for their own purposes. The dead hold their secrets tightly, and a Scorpion armed with such knowledge would be a threat indeed. The periodic appearance of Scorpion courtiers at the temple gates does little to assuage such rumors. On the other hand, it is not unusual for samurai to honor Shinsei by a visit to nearby Brotherhood temples, and why should the Scorpion be any different? The monks, for their part, keep quiet about their Scorpion connections, whatever they may be. Visitors are welcome, and most of the temple's scrolls are available to any who would ask for them. If the Scorpion have some undue advantage there, they keep it very well hidden.

The Spider Clan

The Spider Clan has very little use for the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Their goals have nothing to do with Enlightenment and their plans require no guidance from such quarters. They have their own brand of faith — twisted and corrupt, though infinitely subtle — and the monks of Shinsei appear to them as nothing more than pious fools. They answer to a far more direct spiritual master, one who remembers the Brotherhood's role in his destruction at the second Day of Thunder all too well.

At the same time, the Clan treats the monks with a certain amount of suspicion. The Brotherhood has powers and insight that even the Dragon cannot match, and they may be able to parse the Spider's carefully hidden plans with ease. Accordingly, many members of the Clan stay as far away from the Brotherhood as they can. Temples are marked off limits, and the Spider's slowly expanding territories contain few, if any, Brotherhood enclaves.

And yet, the Brotherhood's unique connection with the peasants of Rokugan means that they can be useful

tools if approached correctly. The good word of a monk can earn the trust of an entire village within moments, and make inroads into the hearts and minds that would take years to forge otherwise. Some agents of the Spider Clan engage in a delicate dance with nearby Brotherhood monks, hoping to curry their favor without revealing the Clan's larger agenda. It can be a tricky balancing act, but the Spider are skilled as no other in the art of deception. A few Brotherhood monks have expressed their gratitude at the Spider's "timely defense" of a temple or village from bandit attacks (attacks that are sometimes staged by the Spider themselves). Their numbers are slowly growing, and the Clan leadership realizes that they must keep growing if their plans are to succeed.

There have even been a few attempts on the Spider's part to infiltrate the Brotherhood, posing as monks in order to move up the ranks and subvert the movement from within. It is a dangerous game for the Lost to play. The rigors and spiritual discipline required to enter the Order may push their corrupted souls to the breaking point, revealing their allegiance in an instant and undoing years of effort to keep the Clan's purpose hidden. So far, such instances have been few, and uniformly written off as more overt acts of mischief from Shadowlands monsters. But already, some monks have noted how such supposedly unclean creatures were able to go undetected for as long as they did, and each new incident increases the chances that someone outside the Clan will finally put two and two together.

Despite that, a very small number of Spider Clan moles have pierced the ranks of the Brotherhood — surviving the rigors of initiation and now acting unseen as a Shinsei monk. They rank among the Clan's most prized spies, acting to keep tabs on the Order and occasionally trying to steer individual monks in directions useful to the Spider. Unsurprisingly, most of them pose as sohei monks, which allow them to report without fear of discovery and stage the occasional "rescue" of an innocent when it suits them.

The Clan's own faith is far, far different from the followers of Shinsei, of course. The Order of the Spider serves as their spiritual center, preaching Daigotsu's twisted version of Enlightenment through personal control. Because the movement is still so small and fractured, their teachings have not yet coalesced around a single definitive text. The Spider's spiritual leaders, Roshungi and Michio, are still more concerned with recruiting members than catalyz-

ing their philosophy, and have expressed a considerable amount of flexibility in the ethos of those they recruit. So long as every member of the Order of the Spider remains loyal to their Clan, its members are free to preach as they please. Both men hope to change that as the Spider becomes more established, but for now, they lack the numbers to do anything differently.

Mental and physical perfection is the cornerstone of the Order's philosophy. Strength of will is all that matters. Through it, other strengths become possible — strength of body, strength of purpose, strength of knowledge — and will allow them to strike out at their enemies in countless unfathomable ways. Fanaticism becomes a tool through which they can hone their minds to a keen edge. The certainty of knowing that you are right — that your philosophies are correct and will eventually lead to the triumph of the Spider Clan — removes all hesitation from your acts. While the wavering Shinsei monks will question their own beliefs in order to find some nebulous form of "wisdom," the Spider monks know better. To question is to doubt, and to doubt is to plant the seeds of your own destruction. The purity of your own faith will allow you to react to any situation, while the certainty that your way is correct lets you move while your enemies are still pondering the best course of action.

Their ranks are dominated by the sohei, skilled in countless martial arts and traveling the land as part of the Clan's elaborate ruse to gain the peasants' favor. As of yet, they only have a single temple — the Temple of Venom hidden deep within the Shinomen Forest — but a few have establish small dojo and training schools that may someday bloom into full-bore temples. For now, the wandering lifestyle suits both them and their Clan just fine. They will never succeed in their goals by hiding behind walls.

The Order's philosophy has a way of producing extremely strong-headed monks — those certain of their own superiority and placing themselves before any other considerations. As the movement grows, it may lead to problems when individual monks begin competing for positions of power. Both Michio and Roshungi believe that they have the strength to crush any opposition, however, and when the time is right, that they can forge the Order of the Spider into a cadre of unstoppable fanatics. When that happens, Shinsei and the old ways will be cast aside, destroyed in favor of the true religion of Rokugan.

Holidays and Festivals

By necessity, the Spider Clan has no festivals of its own. To acknowledge their true spiritual master is to destroy their ultimate purpose, so they keep their proclivities hidden at all times. Instead, they participate in whatever local festivals or holidays take place in their area, emulating the customs of whichever Clan they are disguised as, or paying homage to major Empire-wide festivals in those few pieces of territory that they control. No one ever notices the dark look in their eyes during formal ceremonies, or the way their voices ring hollow when delivering prayers to the ancestors. Those hidden truths can wait for another day to reveal them.

The one holiday they do note is the tenth day of the Horse — four days after the Chrysanthemum Festival. On that day, the peasants of Rokugan bolt their doors for fear of evil spirits and samurai grip their katana a little tighter as they stare out from their posts into the waiting darkness. The date has no formal name, but followers of Fu Leng use it to honor their dark master. All members of the Spider Clan — at least all those who know their true purpose — must acknowledge the date through a gesture or sacrifice of some sort. Those being closely watched may simply mutter a prayer of supplication in their chambers. Those with more leverage might make minor sacrifices in some dark corner or another. The most audacious will burn someone alive on a bonfire, as the Fallen God dictates. The highest form of sacrifice is a secret murder that serves the Clan's overall goals — a slaughtered traveler whose death can be pinned on bandits, or a Family of farmers burned alive by an "oni" attack. Through them, the Spider move ever closer towards seizing the throne, and thus pay Fu Leng the highest honor of which they can conceive.

Temples: The Temple of Venom

Deep within the heart of Shinomen Forest, far from any paths trod by mortal man, sits a strange little weaver's hut flanked on all sides by tall trees. An old woman sits in the center of it, slowly drawing out silken threads from an ancient spinning wheel. Her face and robes are the color of chalk; her eyes are sunken pits of pure black. The threads she spins expand outward to encompass the trees beyond, creating an impenetrable tangle resembling that of a spider's web.

In the clearing past the hut, practically covered by the silken strands, stands the heart of the Spider Clan's faith: the Temple of Venom. It is very old, its stones having been

laid centuries before the rise of man. Members of the Spider Clan who visit there believe that it once belonged to the naga, but that they abandoned it long before falling into their slumber. The monk Roshungi found it during his wanderings, and as the Spider began to lay their plans, he decided that it would make the ideal heart for the new faith of Rokugan. It is deeply hidden, protected both by the oni at the spinning wheel and by the dangers of the forest itself. Within its walls, the Spider can show their true colors.

Here, deception is cast aside. It is the only place in Rokugan outside of the Shadowlands where the Spider Clan leaders can speak openly, and those who hold sway here relish the opportunity to throw off their facades. Daigotsu himself appears infrequently, just enough to check on the two monks who have founded his Order and see that they are acting as they should. The others come and go as they please — corrupt monks, infiltrators and moles, and the occasional Shadowlands creature in need of a safe haven before causing some form of mischief inside Rokugan.

Roshungi himself demands that all followers of the Order of the Spider visit him here at least once before their formal induction. The Order itself is deeply fragmented, still too new to have adopted a single philosophy. Many of the monks follow their own path, and as of now, the Clan must accept that individualism if they are to survive. But Roshungi needs every member of the Order to understand the game they play. If they cannot acknowledge their true master at least once, then they have no purpose in the Order and are at best pawns to be used and thrown away.

When Roshungi believes that someone is ready to learn the truth, he engineers a quest to take them to the heart of the Shinomen, where the temple awaits. In order to enter, they must first pass through the webs without cutting a single one. It is easier than it first appears, though it requires patience and dedication. Roshungi believes that accomplishing this task demonstrates sufficient personal control to be allowed entrance. Those who fail are left to the spinning oni to be disposed of as she sees fit. Inside, the twisting walls and corridors lead inexorably to the center of the temple: a main chamber where Michio or Roshungi meet to induct their followers.

Initiation can mean any number of things, depending upon the applicant. In some cases, they perform an elaborate ceremony to Fu Leng, complete with blood sacrifice and enticements to the Dark Lord. Other times, it is a test of self-control or willpower. On a few occasions, it's noth-

ing more than revealing the identity of the true masters of the Spider Clan and an admonition to remember their true goals. Few who are ever brought here are inclined to refuse. Either they are so deep within the Spider's machinations that they have nowhere else to turn or they already had some inkling of who was behind it all and join willingly. The tiny handful who balk never leave the temple alive.

Michio and Roshungi maintain a small contingent of about a dozen followers here, which serve their needs when they are in residence and perform certain other key functions of the temple. One of the most important entails the brewing of poisons, from which the temple gains its name. The Spider Clan has managed to filch a number of potent formulae from the Scorpion, and several monks work to replicate and/or intensify their effects. They can't hope to match the staggering array of toxins that the Scorpion have developed, but they are learning quickly, and they have begun to develop a few of their own as well.

They emphasize effects that cannot be traced, allowing them to use the toxins without drawing attention to themselves. The Spider understand that, at least for now, they cannot allow the Scorpion to know that they are try-

ing to emulate one of their most famous methods, and that the Spider have even stolen some of their trade secrets. Eventually, they hope to become skilled enough at it to replicate any specific poison, including those that are known to be favored by the Scorpion. It will do wonders to help sow discord when the time is right. For now, they simply use it the way any other Clan would use it — to dispose of those inconvenient to them and further their own ultimate goals. Michio and Roshungi distribute the poisons via their regular wanderings, hiding them where other members of the Clan can be directed in case they need them.

Other monks in the Temple work on forgeries, craft items like Clan banners and arrowheads to plant in convenient places, and keep track of the Spider's various plots and schemes. A large map has been mounted in an antechamber, marking the moles and spies of the Clan and their location in Rokugan. Lines have been drawn between pertinent figures... lines that bear an eerie resemblance to the cobweb patterns being woven outside. Roshungi once attempted to question the oni at the spinning wheel about it, but the creature merely smiled and said that the pattern was not yet complete.



In time, the denizens of the Temple of Venom believe that this will be the spiritual center of Rokugan, controlling an equally elaborate pattern of shrines and temples to Fu Leng. But for now, it remains silent and hidden, waiting for the moment when the lurking Spider will finally strike.

The Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn have trod a path very different from those of the other Great Clans, and though they have integrated into the Empire, they have never quite learned to embrace Shinsei the way the other Clans have. They consider the Tao helpful, but only to a point. As a means of controlling one's emotions and finding solutions to problems that may not be readily apparent, it certainly has its merits. But they look askance at the notion that it leads to some kind of fundamental truth and they distrust the often eerie certainty with which the Brotherhood espouses its beliefs. Theirs is nothing if not a practical Clan, and they view Shinsei's teachings the same way they would a sheep or a goat. It is important only in what it provides them.

The principle exception to this is the Iuchi Family, who became fascinated by the Brotherhood and have embraced its teachings as their own. Like the rest of their Clan, however, they still view it as but one truth out of many, and often blend its philosophies with naturalist teachings, ancestor worship, and a hodgepodge of religions left over from their travels in the lands beyond Rokugan. Monks who hail from the Iuchi Family are respected for their broad knowledge and their way of making profound connections between seemingly unrelated subjects. But traditionalists within the Brotherhood balk at their relatively free interpretation of the Tao, and the way they often color it with gaijin ideas.

The Unicorn themselves treat different parts of the Tao very differently. The notion of communion with nature and acceptance of the Elemental forces around them is something that they can accept because of their experience of the lands that they call their own. On the steppe, you realize your insignificance in the face of the larger universe. By accepting that, you can endure and survive on the plains. By fighting it, you only hasten your own death.

Many a Unicorn shepherd and samurai-ko can quote passages of the Tao relating to such matters at length, as well as Shinsei's teachings on the harmony of the Five Rings.

They have less use, however, for more formal passages on behavior and philosophy. They are not a naturally contemplative Clan, and while the night sky above them provides countless mysteries, they do not believe that the Tao can unlock them. Instead, they blend Shinsei's teachings with common folk wisdom, Fortune worship, and the remnants of strange rituals from the Burning Sands. Each facet emphasizes practicality, the need to respect the wider world around you, and the emphasis on survival as a form of strength. Monks who visit the Unicorn lands often express bafflement at the *mélange* of concepts and ideas that constitute their religion. And yet it all seems to hold true for the Unicorn, and even in the roughest ways, it still does service to Shinsei's wisdom.

Though there are comparatively few monasteries here, many monks of the Brotherhood find their way to the wind-swept plains of the Unicorn. The stark and sparsely populated steppe makes an ideal place for solitary meditation, and it isn't unusual to come across Shinsei monks just sitting in the midst of a field with no one else around for miles. They set up hermitages here, gazing at the stars or meditating on the gradual approach of an Utaku samurai-ko from the distant horizon. Brotherhood temples in the Unicorn lands tend to be extremely isolated, even for the Order, and rarely contain more than a dozen or so monks. Gatherings larger than that feel like an affront to the desolate beauty of these lands.

The Unicorn themselves are always open to Shinsei's teachings, though they rarely take more than the basics to heart. Monks with a knack for storytelling and a willingness to leave their temples are often drawn here and find eager audiences in the simple shepherds and gruff herders of this land. They quickly learn not to push too hard and to respect the independent spirits of those they meet. Many find insight in the ways of the wild horsemen that they would never have uncovered otherwise, and they often speak of learning more from them than they could ever hope to teach.

The Moto Family in particular seem receptive to some of Shinsei's teachings. Their Family's horrifying legacy with the Shadowlands left them humbled and grim, embracing death almost as an insane relief. Shinsei's teachings about the world moving in cycles, about the promise of infinite compassion, and of even the greatest evil serving some

larger good has brought peace to many troubled Moto souls. They often credit Shinsei's wisdom with bolstering their hearts during the Moto War. They also believe that it has helped temper their ascent to leadership of the Unicorn with the humility required to be effective leaders. They feel they owe the Brotherhood a debt, and much of the Clan's openness to the monks stems from the Moto Family's lingering goodwill.

At the same time, the remainder of the Unicorn exhibit a gruffness and occasional disdain for established Rokugani doctrine that can rub some monks the wrong way. They repeatedly engage in habits that the rest of Rokugan finds taboo (such as eating red meat) and monks unaccustomed to life outside of a monastery are often shocked by such behavior. Few members of the most rigid orders find they can remain in the Unicorn lands for long, and those monks who endure here either devote themselves entirely to solitude or keep themselves open to alternate approaches to Shinsei's wisdom. The Unicorn, for their part, neither hinder nor encourage such behavior. They are always happy to see Brotherhood monks arrive to tell stories and spread their brand of wisdom... and just as happy to see them return to the south and east, where they feel the monks truly belong. Life is transient and things come and go; in their own way, the Unicorn understand this just as well as the Brotherhood.

Holidays and Festivals

The Unicorn initially downplayed their foreign influences when they returned to Rokugan. They embraced the festivals and religious observances of their new home and while elements of the old ways remained, they were far less prominent than they might have been elsewhere. That changed when Shinjo returned in 1133. The reinvigorated Moto rose to leadership of the Clan, and with them came a plethora of new customs and religious observances that the Unicorn have since incorporated into their culture.

To be sure, most major Rokugani holidays remain. They still celebrate the New Year as other Rokugani do, and large holidays such as the Bon Festival are observed as they would be elsewhere in the Empire. The Unicorn take special delight in the Chrysanthemum Festival, which is enhanced by the beauty of their own Chrysanthemum Lake and which honors the Kami from whom they too are descended.

Other observances, however, are much more their own: brought over from the Burning Sands and now practiced in a land that finds them strange and a little frightening. In some cases, the Unicorn have attempted to blend gaijin customs with closely matched Rokugani holidays. Some of their religious holidays are entirely foreign to the rest of Rokugan. They honor heroes who fell long before Shinjo's return or pay homage to deities that the Empire has never heard of.

Perhaps the most prominent is known as the Day of Brother Horse. It takes place on the last day of the Month of the Horse and is intended to honor the Unicorn's most prized assets. They make sacrifices to the Fortunes of horsemanship, honor the spirits of fallen Battle Maidens, and acknowledge the invaluable contributions the horse has made to their way of life. Like many Unicorn holidays, its trappings appear strange and foreign to the other Clans. Yet the Unicorn have taken steps to integrate it more closely into Shinsei's teachings. Many of their prayers on that day include references to the Five Rings, and to the natural world to which they are bound through their steeds. It doesn't always soothe outsiders who view the ceremonies, but it does remind them that — as odd as they may seem sometimes — the Unicorn are still members of the Empire.

And the races that cap every Day of Brother Horse simply can't be beat.

The Temple of the Roaming Herd

The Roaming Herd is one of the most unique temples ever to grace the face of Rokugan. It was founded by a small order of fifteen monks — former Unicorn all, who did not believe that entering a monastery needed to constitute the end of their wandering ways. They conscripted a small team of mules and obtained three large yurts donated from Khan Moto Chagatai. They use them to move their entire temple from one spot to the next, forever roaming and yet maintaining with them the sanctity of a sacred locale.

Their tents are nothing special, made of durable cloth but of a plain brown color and unadorned with any symbols. They are held up with wooden posts that can be disassembled and loaded onto the backs of the mule train. The interiors contain only sleeping mats made of sheep's wool, a few cooking pots, and a tiny stone shrine that can be easily carried on the back of a single man. While they

are devoted to the notion of a proper temple, so too do they remember their vows of poverty, and strive to keep their movable home as simple as possible.

They travel in a random route across the Unicorn lands, stopping wherever the fates will them. Their monastery is open to visitors and they entertain peasants and samurai alike within their tents. Members of the Order of the Roaming Herd are all fairly devout yamabushi monks and dedicate themselves completely to the contemplation of the natural world. They are much friendlier than many other yamabushi, however, and they have developed keen storytelling skills with which they regale visitors whenever they set down roots.

They stay in one place anywhere from a few days to a few months. They rarely move during the winter, when the snows make travel dangerous, but there is no telling where they might set down roots in the colder months. It could be at the top of a mountain as easily as a warm village. How they survive in those isolated places none can say, but every spring, they reappear, their temple arising in a shepherd's pasture or outside the walls of Shiro Utaku.

Their purpose in such endless wandering is to emphasize the transience of the universe, and their own impermanent states within it. The idea that buildings and structures are as impermanent as people finds fertile ground in the tents they pull behind them. Every time they raise it in a new place, they meditate on its significance, and every time they break the tents down, they give thanks for the experience of living where they have. Their process proves surprisingly enlightening.

The Unicorn for their part, find them a comforting sight. Their dedication to the Brotherhood is total, but also refracted through the unique sensibilities of their Clan. The Roaming Herd reminds them that they are still a part of Rokugan — and by extension the greater universe — and yet can always carry their one-of-a-kind heritage with pride.

The Temple of the Lost Moto

The Moto Family was reborn with the return of Shinjo from the Burning Sands beyond Rokugan. But before that day, they were bound by the greatest dishonor ever to befall the Unicorn — the corruption and fall of Moto Tsume and his followers by the Shadowlands. In the year



825, Tsume's army rode forth into the Tainted region to bring battle to Fu Leng. The lucky ones died. The rest were consumed by the Taint and rode forth again, this time as undead followers of Fu Leng. A few scattered survivors escaped back to the Unicorn lands, where they formed the White Guard and attempted to erase their Family's shame through acts of suicidal bravery.

All of that changed with Shinjo's return. The Moto were rejuvenated by the addition of long-lost Family members from beyond the Empire, and together, they finally destroyed the tainted side of their lineage in the Moto War of 1133. The Family has since taken command of the Unicorn. But they have never forgotten the stain to their honor that the Dark Moto represented, nor have they forgotten their fallen brethren, claimed by the Shadowlands and suffering for centuries under a fate worse than death.

The Temple of the Lost Moto is a memorial to their tragic tale — a reminder that even the mightiest Family can fall and that even the blackest traitors deserve some measure of sympathy. It stands on the outermost region of Unicorn territory, near Chrysanthemum Petal Lake. Its walls are white and silent, unadorned save for a few instances of the white masks the White Moto wore while their Family was still under Fu Leng's control. Its large doors point due south — the same direction in which Moto Tsume rode that tragic day when he and his followers descended into darkness. The monks who tend to this shrine are all former members of the Moto Family. Though they renounced their ties when they take their vows, it is a point of honor that only they may tend this shrine. The sin was theirs; the atonement should be no different.

Daily prayers consist of remembering the hundreds of Moto who were corrupted by the Shadowlands. The monks recite each of their names one by one and entreat their spirits to find peace in the afterlife. The names of every lost Moto have been etched into the walls near the central shrine, and monks who join this Order must memorize them before taking their vows. They do not refer to them as the Dark Moto — to do so would be to dishonor their spirits. Instead, they are referred to as the Lost Moto, reclaimed in the Moto War and destroyed so that they may be reborn in a purer form through the kharmic wheel of Heaven.

Among the artifacts contained at the Temple is Moto Tsume's shattered mask, recovered from the battlefield and purified through daily rituals. The spear of Otaku Kamoko can be found here as well, and her tragic death leading the Dark Moto into battle is recounted to every visitor who arrives here. Blood can still be seen on the spear's blade — the blood of the Unicorn Clan, spilled by their sister and reclaimed only through sacrifice and woe. The monks never touch these artifacts directly, moving and cleaning them only with cloth subjected to ritual purification, and burned afterward.

The Khan himself arrives at the shrine once every year on the anniversary of Moto Tsume's departure. There, he fasts with the monks, prays for the souls of the Lost Moto, and entreats the spirits for the wisdom to lead his people away from such darkness. A number of Battle Maidens make pilgrimages here as well — some ordered to by their superiors who consider them too headstrong and proud for their own good. They are admonished to meditate by the spear of their fallen predecessor and ponder how those who believe they can do good are often corrupted by the blackest evil.

Though often a sad and quiet place, the temple also cultivates an atmosphere of peace. The Lost Moto were eventually redeemed, after all, and the Celestial Heavens allowed their honor to be restored after two centuries. The monks cultivate an attitude of humility and faith in the face of cosmic designs, and shade their acts of atonement with the knowledge that forgiveness comes to all things. This is most evinced during the Chrysanthemum Festival, when the temple throws open its doors and the monks are permitted to participate in the festivities. For this one day, they taste life's joys, and remember that even the greatest darkness must one day pass.

MASTERS OF MAGIC

FESTIVALS OF THE
EMPIRE

"It seems like every week the Phoenix have a different festival. Not that I'm complaining."

— Satoshi

Rokugan is a deeply pious land, and the Empire hosts numerous religious festivals and celebrations over the course of the year. These festivals are celebrated by all Rokugani, but they tend to be especially popular among the common folk — the heimin lead difficult and tedious lives, and for them, the seasonal festivals offer memorable (albeit brief) interruptions to their daily toil.

Samurai, from whom Bushido demands a life of dignified self-discipline, tend to be less openly enthusiastic about festivals. But there are exceptions. The Crab, for example, greet any festival as an opportunity to enjoy a good drink and blow off some of the accumulated tension from their duties on the Wall. And the Scorpion city of Ryoko Owari is known for its exceptionally vigorous celebration of the Bon Festival, with samurai joining the revelry right alongside the commoners.

In the beliefs of the Rokugani, all objects contain spirits, and nature's plants — trees, grasses, and flowers — are symbols of life itself. Hence, many of the Empire's festivals are named in honor of flowers, such as the Chrysanthemum, Iris, and White Orchid Festivals. Rokugani believe that flowers encapsulate both the universal laws of nature and the unending cycle of the Celestial Wheel: birth, death, rebirth. Several major festivals, including the famed Setsuban celebration, also incorporate flower offerings to ward off illness and natural disasters.

New Year's Day (Oshogatsu) — First Day of the Hare

The festival calendar traditionally begins with the Festival of the New Year, held on the first day of the Month of the Hare, which is the first day of spring and thus a moment of rebirth. This is the most elaborate of Rokugan's annual festivals, and it is generally regarded as the most important as well. All Rokugani celebrate their birthday on New Year's Day, regardless of when they were actually born, so this festival is also a major family celebration for samurai and heimin alike. Every city and town decorates its temples and streets, and every family takes this occasion to hold familial gatherings and visit the local temples and shrines. Among the samurai class, family visits can become quite elaborate, with extensive exchanges of gifts and formalized well-wishes. Flowers — symbolic of spring and fertility — are the favored decoration, and are strewn across the streets and placed decoratively on every house. The festival concludes in the evening with parades, music, and fireworks. A pious Rokugani family will spend the day after the festival at home, thanking the kami for another fruitful year.

In the Imperial City, the New Year's Festival is traditionally accompanied by the Emperor's shihohai ritual, in which he offers prayers for the well-being of the Empire. The Emperor encloses himself in his private shrines after dusk on the first of the Hare, and spends the next 24 hours in meditation, speaking to the Fortunes on behalf of his subjects. After his fasting and meditation end, a grand feast is held to celebrate the close relationship between

the Celestial Heavens and their most beloved son. Needless to say, this aspect of the festival became somewhat problematic after the ascension of the Toturi Dynasty, whose connection to the Celestial Heavens was not nearly as direct as that of the Hantei Dynasty. Since the fall of the Toturi, the shihohai ritual has gone uncompleted, and the common folk of Rokugan worry that without the Emperor's annual prayers to Heaven, Rokugan may soon lose the favor of the Fortunes altogether.

In the past when the shihohei ritual was performed correctly, the public would traditionally be allowed into the palace grounds after the Emperor emerged to pronounce Heaven's blessings. For most Rokugani this was their only opportunity to see the glorious gardens and vistas of the Imperial Palace. Many games and ceremonies were traditionally held on the palace grounds at this time, including a popular game of chance called karuta.

7-5-3 Festival — Thirteenth Day of the Dragon

A lesser but still significant festival, held on the thirteenth day of the Dragon, the 7-5-3 Festival celebrates the children of the Empire, and is venerated by heimin and samurai alike. The name of the festival is based around three numbers (7, 5, and 3) that are generally considered unlucky by Rokugani. Boys at the age of five and girls at the ages of three and seven are considered to be especially vulnerable to bad luck and evil spirits, and this festival is designed in large part to counteract such bad fortune. At dawn on the day of the festival, these children go to the local shrines, where the monks of the Brotherhood bless them and pray for their futures. The monks burn incense, ring bells, and light candles to pray for their safe and healthy future.

Traditionally, the children dress in their finest clothing for the occasion, and they are accompanied by their families, who follow them while wearing white veils over their faces. It is believed these veils keep the spirits from paying attention to any of the family members, so virtuous spirits and ancestors will see only the children and lavish their blessings solely upon them.

After the family visits the shrine, it is considered lucky to visit the local markets and buy chitose-ame, the so-called 'thousand-year candy,' thereby including the ancestors of the last thousand years in the celebration.

Cherry Blossom Festival — Twenty-third Day of the Dragon

This may be the oldest of the flower-oriented festivals of Rokugan, dating back almost to the dawn of the Empire. A book called the *Tale of Genji*, a tale from the Second Century which celebrates the glorious youth of the Shining Prince, Hantei Genji, records what may be the first cherry blossom viewing. An entire chapter of this revered work is dedicated to describing a cherry-blossom viewing party, where members of the Emperor Hantei I's court gathered under the blossoms to make merry with food, music, and poetry until late into the night. The book claims that here the Shining Prince met his eternal love, Oborozukiyo, the Lady of the Misty Moon, and this may be why romance and love are often associated with cherry blossoms.

Of course, Rokugan's veneration for cherry-blossoms pre-dates the *Tale of Genji*. It is widely believed that the celebration of cherry-blossoms began when Hantei I and his bride planted a cherry tree in Ootosan Uchi to celebrate the birth of their first son, Genji himself. However, this may be a later invention to justify a general spread of popular belief. The island of Jamausuki — a major island in the Islands of Silk and Spice archipelago — is said to have been one of the earliest centers of religious faith in the Empire, and to this day, massive cherry trees cover the entire island, suggesting that cherry blossoms have held religious significance from the very earliest times.

Today, much of the importance of the cherry-blossom festival is based on a legend about Daikaihime, daughter of Kuroshin, the Fortune of Agriculture. Daikaihime is viewed as a goddess of spring and vernal abundance. According to popular belief, she sometimes descends from the Celestial Heavens to take possession of a cherry tree, so people who gather under blossoming cherry trees offer up their prayers to Kuroshin for a plentiful harvest. It is believed that Daikaihime will carry their prayers to her father's ears, ensuring they get a sympathetic hearing.

Iris Festival (also known as the Doll Festival or Kite Festival) — Twenty-Fifth Day of the Serpent

This festival is actually two separate events held simultaneously, one celebration focused on girls and the other on boys. In the past these were separate events, but over the centuries they have merged together into a single festival celebrating the positive qualities of children (as opposed to the 7-5-3 Festival, which seeks to protect them from

negative influences). In contrast to some of the other festivals, the Iris Festival tends to be more favored by samurai families than by commoners, although the wealthier among the heimin do try to participate to some extent. Rokugani of all castes see the Iris Festival as a celebration not just of children as physical beings, but of what children represent: purity, promise, and hope for the future.

The Doll Festival is the female side of the celebration, and girls participate by dressing in special green kimonos and showing off elaborate displays of their dolls (which, among samurai, are quite expensive and are designed for decoration, not play). A favored activity is for the girls to arrange their dolls in the front room of their house, forming them into a "court" of tiered platforms complete with Emperor, Empress, attendants, and musicians. The girls also customarily visit their friends during the festival, expressing respect (sincere or otherwise) for the beauty of their dolls.

The long, narrow leaves of the iris flower are associated with the sharp blades of a sword, and many Rokugani place iris leaves in boys' baths to give them a martial spirit. The male side of the festival focuses on encouraging symbols of manly strength and courage for boys who may well grow up to be warriors. Boys are expected to display warrior dolls outside their houses and to fly streamers and kites of brilliant colors and styles, which are symbols of success.

Typically, children of both genders receive expensive gifts from their families during this festival — things they will need as adults, such as weapons or court kimonos. There are also customary foods associated with the festival, particularly various kinds of rice cakes, often filled with bean paste and wrapped in grass, oak leaves, or bamboo leaves.

Chrysanthemum Festival (Choyo no Sekku) — Sixth Day of the Horse

Traditionally the Empire's most lavish festival after the New Year's Festival, the Chrysanthemum Festival takes place on the sixth day of the Month of the Horse, generally believed to be the day on which the eight Kami first fell to the Earth. The Chrysanthemum was the symbol of the Hantei Dynasty, representing their ties to the Sun Goddess and Hantei's position as pre-eminent among all the Kami. Thus the Chrysanthemum Festival was a celebration of both the Emperor's family line and of the founders of the original Seven Clans.

Since the fall of the Hantei Dynasty, however, the Chrysanthemum Festival has lost some of its importance. The Toturi Dynasty continued the festival, expanding it into a celebration of both the Hantei and the Toturi Emperors. Since the extinction of the Toturi, however, the status of the festival has been in doubt, and the Chrysanthemum Festival of 1170 was a distinctly muted affair. Whether a new Dynasty will revive the celebration or allow it to dwindle away remains to be seen.

In its full glory, the Chrysanthemum Festival is one of the most elaborate celebratory rituals in Rokugan. For seven days, four before the Festival and three after, almost all labor stops in the Empire; even peasants are not permitted to lift their tools. Only the hinin are exempt from this rule, as garbage must still be collected, even during this sacred time. Only on the day of the festival itself can anyone work, and even then only in celebration of the Hantei and the other seven Kami. The actual celebration encompasses every sort of ritual and spectacle, from prayers to fireworks and music.

During the reign of the Hantei, it was long rumored that on the fourth day following the Chrysanthemum celebration, the inhabitants of the Shadowlands staged a massive, bloody bonfire in which they hurled captives and other unfortunates into the flames to celebrate the prophesied Return of the Dark One, the day on which Fu Leng would rise from his Festering Pit and steal the power of the Hantei. If this sinister celebration did take place, there is no record of it today — Daigotsu has instituted other celebrations for his Lost followers. Nevertheless, even today, on the fourth day after the Chrysanthemum Festival many Rokugani choose to remain indoors rather than tempt the attention of evil spirits.

Kanto Festival — Second Day of the Rooster

Along with the Setsuban Festival and the Iris Festival, the Kanto Festival originated during the earliest period of Rokugani history, probably before the Kami had even completed organizing humans into Clans. Scholars believe the Kanto Festival derives its name and purpose from a legend among the ancient tribes of Isawa, who believed that lethargy from the summer heat leaves one vulnerable to disease. Thus, on the second day of the Rooster, in the hottest part of the summer, the Rokugani common people raise kanto, great wooden poles inlaid with chips of rose quartz, to drive the sleepiness away. These poles are dec-

orated with colorful lanterns, which are kept lit night and day for three full days, supposedly to draw out the sleepiness and encourage hard work and productivity.

The festival has a secondary role as well: The kanto are traditionally carved in the form of the ears from rice plants, expressing hope for a bountiful harvest in the fall.

Setsuban Festival — Eighth Day of the Monkey

Even in the very earliest days of Rokugan, expeditions to view the autumn foliage were a popular entertainment, and with the passage of time these activities became formalized into the Setsuban Festival. The festival's timing — at the end of summer — soon came to grant it further significance: since the warmer months are most favorable to war, the arrival of autumn came to symbolize the winding down of the campaign season and the arrival of peace.

The Setsuban Festival is held on the eighth day of the Monkey, a day considered especially lucky and auspicious. No man may shed blood on that day — all executions are put off, battles and campaigns are halted, and criminals may even be granted freedom and clemency. Many of the more pious Clans forbid their samurai from even carrying weapons in public on this day, lest they inadvertently break the sacred truce. Rokugan may be a place governed by warriors, but on this day it sets war aside to celebrate the coming of peace.

Bon Festival — Twenty-Eighth Day of the Dog

This ancient festival of reverence for the dead, sometimes also called the Paper Lantern Festival, is held on the last day of the month of the Dog. The Bon Festival pays honor to the dead, appeases the souls of the ancestors, and allows the living a time of remembrance, an opportunity to speak to their lost friends and family members and try to come to grips with the enigma of mortality.

The highlights of the Bon Festival are the great parades and displays that fill the streets of almost every major city in Rokugan. Representations of the Kami, the celestial Dragons, and innumerable ghosts, ancestors, and beings of the Spirit Realms transform them into strange and mystical places. Although these celebrations are especially popular among the common people, samurai do not hold entirely aloof, and in some places (such as Ryoko Owari and the Mantis Isles) they join into the event with the same enthusiasm as lesser folk.

Rokugani believe that during the Bon Festival, when death and the Spirit Realms are revered, the souls of the dead come closest to their heirs in the living world. Everyone's ancestors look upon every action they have taken for the last year, and this is the time to atone to them for any misdeeds. In return, the ancestors should look favorably on their descendants, offering wisdom and blessings.

Although the Bon Festival is a celebration of mortality, this encompasses the celebration of life as well as of death. Parades, music, traditional dances, and fireworks all figure prominently in the festival. Small cakes made from bleached white rice, covered in brown sugar, are traditionally served, reminding people that death (symbolized by the color white) is a part of life and is always present, even if hidden.

Customarily, the end of the Bon Festival is signaled by lighting small colored paper lanterns, each marked with the name of someone who died during the past year. Rokugani believe that spirits who are unable to leave the mortal world can follow these lanterns to Meido for judgment. They also believe these same lanterns light the way back to Yomi for ancestral spirits who have returned during the festival.

Festival of the River of Stars — Ninth Day of the Boar

In the night sky above Rokugan there is a bright arc of sky known as the River of Stars (and in the past, sometimes, as the Necklace of Amaterasu). On either side of this celestial road lie two exceptionally bright stars, veritable jewels of the sky, known to the Rokugani as the Weaver Star and the Cowherd Star. Legend claims these stars are lovers, able to meet only once a year on the ninth day of the ninth month.

In legend, the first star is named after Tanata, a weaving maiden from the Isawa tribes, while the second star took the name of Ujihata, a simple cowherd from the lands claimed by Akodo. The two were not allowed to marry, and they prayed to the Fortunes to grant some way for them to be together. Supposedly, Tanata was so fine a weaver that the Fortunes themselves were smitten by her skill and wished it for themselves. When Tanata and Ujihata died, the Fortunes took them into the Heavens and placed them by the River of Stars, so they could see one another across the star-road without dishonoring their families. Through the Fortunes' mercy, once each year, the two are allowed to be together for a single night.

The Festival of the River of Stars is a festival for lovers, and it is considered the most romantic day of the year. Samurai and commoners alike turn out on this night to “chaperone” the two celestial lovers. Many mortal lovers take advantage of this to meet secretly while their friends and family are away. Because this night is considered most auspicious for those smitten by love, many Rokugani write their romantic wishes on prayer ribbons and hang them on tree branches, often accompanied by small ornaments or other offerings. Of course, wise lovers make sure their wishes are written in an indirect or alliterative manner, since the unscrupulous or simply curious could take advantage of this tradition to acquire damaging information about them.

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath — Seventh Day of the Rat

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath began in the earliest days of the Empire, and it has survived, in essence if not in all forms, to the present. In former times Rokugani both revered and feared the Moon, Lord Onnatongu, the jealous and vengeful husband of Amaterasu. Onnatongu had helped Amaterasu create the world, but he looked down with contempt and anger at the mortals who filled it, just as he had looked down on his own children when he tried to destroy them. Nor could his hostile attention be escaped, as the moon was always in the sky, ever watchful. The Festival of the Moon's Wrath was intended as much to appease him and turn aside his wrath as it was to venerate him.

After Lord Moon was destroyed and replaced by the ascended mortal Hitomi, the nature of this festival changed somewhat, though not as much as one might expect. Although Hitomi was a former mortal woman, and thus not intrinsically hostile to mortals in the way that Onnatongu had been, she was notoriously mercurial and temperamental, and she seemed to demand veneration and appeasement in much the same way as her predecessor.

Today, however, with the Heavens themselves in turmoil and Hitomi's position under siege from the Obsidian Dragon, the future status of this festival is uncertain.

The Festival of the Moon's Wrath is observed in an unusual manner. Samurai surround themselves with friends and family, and then cease all speech from sunset on the seventh day of the Rat to sunrise on the ninth day of that month. Not a single word is spoken by a samurai during those two days, thereby showing their reverence for the Moon. Those who break this silence, it is said, will draw the Moon's wrath.

A Peasant Festival: Shouting Day

Unlike the other festivals discussed in this chapter, Shouting Day is not a celebration revered by samurai. Rather, it is a custom followed solely by the men of the lower classes, and samurai do their best to completely ignore it.

The purpose of Shouting Day is to allow peasant men to relieve the accumulated stresses, angers, and tensions of the past year. On the sixth day of the Tiger these men gather together, well away from any samurai, and shout to Osano-Wo at the top of their lungs, venting their frustrations and problems. Many villages make Shouting Day into a sort of contest, with the participants competing over the content, volume, and length of their shout. Popular complaints include bad harvests, disobedient children, and disrespectful wives. Complaints about samurai are generally not aired during Shouting Day, as the peasants know the samurai caste would not be able to ignore this celebration if it turned into an attack on them.

Shouting Day was founded in the port city of Mura Sabishii Toshi, and is still celebrated most vigorously there. Supposedly, Shouting Day originated when the settlement was struck by a terrible tsunami. Hundreds died and an entire year's worth of crops were lost, leaving the village in chaos and ruin. An older farmer named Iochi saw the tsunami as an unprovoked attack by Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Thunder, and began screaming at the heavens as loud as he could, shaking his fist at the air. Soon the entire surviving village joined him, shouting their anger and shaking their fists until sunset.

Today, the stone where Iochi stood has a place of honor in Mura Sabishii Toshi, and it is not uncommon for peasants to walk many days in order to use this stone as the stage for their Shouting Day ritual.

New Year's Eve (Toshi no Ichi) — Twenty-Eighth Day of the Tiger

The counterpoint to the New Year's Day Festival is the festival of the year's end, called Toshi no Ichi, held on the final day of the old year (the twenty-eighth day of the month of the Tiger). This event is designed to prepare the Empire for the coming new year, and is observed with equal vigor by samurai and commoners alike. It is believed that the Celestial Heavens look down with special favor on Rokugan at New Year's Day, so the end of the year becomes a time to cleanse and prepare for that moment. Houses are cleaned, streets are brushed clear, and Daimyo customarily issue new clothes to all the peasants under their jurisdiction.

During these cleansing rituals, Rokugani peasants traditionally hang a rope of straw known as a shimenawa inside their houses, preventing evil spirits from entering the place. At the conclusion of the festival, these strips of straw are burned along with any other trappings or decorations from the festival, so that all old spirits are purged and karma is cleansed for the New Year's celebrations the next morning. Similarly, both commoner and samurai families create special altars within their houses known as toshidana, covered with rice cakes and bottles of sake, to honor the spirits of the New Year when they arrive the next morning.

At dusk during the New Year's Eve Festival, the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei conduct a great ritual cleaning of their temples. Throughout the Emerald Empire, temples are emptied and scrubbed, cleansed with fresh water, and their bells are rung to drive out any lingering evil spirits. The bells toll a total of 49 times (seven times seven, for the benevolent and wrathful aspects of the seven Great Fortunes), the temples are fully cleansed, and visitors are welcomed back inside.

The Festivals of the Kami

Each of the seven founding Kami are celebrated within the lands of their own Clan, with elaborate festivals that include music, theatrical performances, dance, and fireworks. However, the Kami are seldom offered more than token veneration outside the lands of their home Clan.

- Hida — Third day of the Boar. The Crab traditionally attest to Hida's strength and bravery with a bragging competition.
- Doji — First day of the Rooster. The children of Doji host a magnificent festival, second only to the New Year's and Chrysanthemum Festivals, to venerate their founder.
- Togashi — Seventeenth day of the Hare. In keeping with the enigmatic traditions of their founder, the Dragon are more apt to spend this day in quiet meditation than in open revelry.
- Akodo — Fifteenth day of the Tiger. The Lion celebrations are calm and dignified, and samurai of courage and discipline are reputed to receive special blessings on this day.
- Shiba — First day of the Monkey. The Phoenix celebration of their founder is an unusual one, for in a very real sense he remains with them to this day. Thus the Phoenix Clan Champion is always at the center of this festival.
- Bayushi — Twenty-eighth day of the Goat. The Scorpion prefer to avoid identifying this festival by its true name, instead allowing visitors to believe it is an obscure local celebration — a fitting tribute to the founder of the Clan of Secrets.
- Shinjo — Twentieth day of the Horse. The Unicorn remember their founder with a celebration suffused with the strange customs they encountered in the Burning Sands.



THERE IS MORE TO THIS WORLD THAN A MERE BUSHI MAY EVER COMPREHEND

In Rokugan, three Great Clans surpass all others in their devotion to magic and communing with the entities through which humans can channel divine power. The Dragon meditate upon the fundamental nature of the universe, finding peace in the fastness of their mountain strongholds. The Mantis have collected a rich variety of shugenja Family traditions, from the conservative Moshi to the Kitsune, with their unusual affinity for spirit creatures. The Phoenix are the most venerable of the three, through the Isawa Family's long tradition of scholarship and their role as the Empire's custodian of divine knowledge.

Masters of Magic focuses on these three Clans, using their interest in magic and the divine as the lens through which to view them. It includes commentary on their diverse magical traditions, new mechanics for building characters and descriptions of temples to use as locations in your campaign or background for your character. The book also includes an extensive discussion of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and their various traditions.

Masters of Magic features:

- New shugenja Paths and spells for Dragon, Mantis and Phoenix characters, including rules for spells that the Phoenix treat as their exclusive knowledge.
- Descriptions of interesting and important temples in the lands of all the Great Clans.
- New Kiho and discussion of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and its various branches.
- Rules options covering multi-Element spells and shugenja who take multiple Basic Schools.
- Descriptions of festivals celebrated throughout the Empire as well as festivals that are unique to each Clan.
- Discussion of changes to the magic system from the Third Edition to Third Edition Revised *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* rules.

Masters of Magic is a *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* supplement, and requires the Third Edition or Third Edition Revised core rule book in order to use it.



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